

CMJ LONG BEACH DUB ALL STARS: LIFE AFTER SUBLIME + 54 REVIEWS

# NEW MUSIC

MONTHLY

# Pulp

Jarvis Cocker  
Rock's Most Unlikely

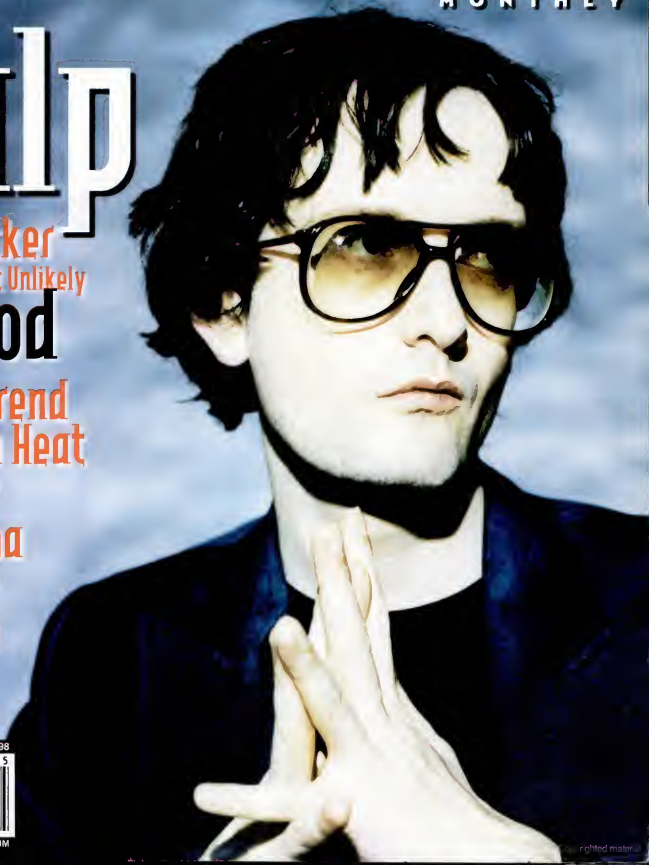
## Sex God

The Reverend  
Horton Heat

Religious Fervor

Morcheeba  
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Emo-core



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**Johnny** took a drag  
from his Kamel and thought,  
"I hate visiting this planet.  
Everyone's so uptight."

## 21 ska-lastic aptitude

A cheat sheet to ska's core curriculum

## 22 momus

"There's a whole generation of bands saying, 'We really like what you were doing on your old albums,' so I've come along and said, 'Hey, I'm better at being Momus than they are.'"

>>> *Interview by Franklin Bruno*

## 26 morcheeba

"It was around the same time as Portishead sold like half a million in America, and from all these record companies saying we were mad, they suddenly turned around and said, 'You're completely right, there's a huge market for this, how much do you want?'"

>>> *Interview by Andrew Beaujon*

## 30 gononond hontan boot



## departments

6 Letters To The Editor

8 Quick Fix: Amazing Royal Crowns, Long Beach Dub All Stars, Prissteeens, Snowpony and our usual glut of information.

16 On The Verge: Lee Feldman, Guster and Quasi

18 **The Scene Is Now: Emo-**  
core

54 Mixed Media: The comic *Poot*, the 'zine *McJob*, the film *Welcome To Woop Woop* and more

81 Geek Love: Def Leppard

82 Just Out/Directory

OLD SKOOL? NU SKOOL? WAKE UP FUNKY BROTHER,  
8SKOOL'S OUT!



# PROPELLERHEADS

## DECKSANDRUMSANDROCKANDROLL

THE DEBUT LP FEATURING 'HISTORY REPEATING',  
'VELVET PANTS', 'BANG ON!'

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# chicagoblues

This is the story of about 15 minutes of my Friday night in a taxi-cab. I have attempted to preserve every bit of dialogue.

**Alison:** The Intercontinental from Michigan, please.

**Cabbie:** Sure thing.

[About five minutes pass in near silence, the jazz on the radio is barely audible.]

**Cabbie:** You cook with a microwave?

**Alison:** Nope. Hate 'em. Can't stand 'em. Don't even have one at home.

**Cabbie:** Well, they won't let you have a hot plate at the YMCA. You got to cook in a microwave.

**Alison:** See.

**Cabbie:** I just started using plastic wrap. You ever use plastic wrap?

**Alison:** No, I'm familiar with it, yes.

**Cabbie:** Well, I wrapped my chicken in plastic wrap, then I microwaved it.

**Alison:** Really? It didn't get tough?

**Cabbie:** No, it was so tender. I thought the plastic would melt at first, but it didn't.

**Alison:** Amazing.

**Cabbie:** The steak was even better.

**Alison:** Steak?

**Cabbie:** Yeah, I cooked the steak with the plastic wrap, and it was delicious.

**Alison:** Hmmm.

**Cabbie:** I never used to be able to eat microwave cooking. I would throw up.

**Alison:** That can't be good.

**Cabbie:** No, but these new microwaves—the Y just got them—these new ones are great. I don't throw up.

**Alison:** Wow.

**Cabbie:** I made the steak with scrambled eggs and rice. I took almost 3/4 of a stick of butter and put it in with the eggs and the rice.

**Alison:** Are you trying to kill yourself, eating like that?

**Cabbie:** I don't eat it every day. I have it only every couple months.

It's like pork. I don't eat pork every day. Gives me a nosebleed.

**Alison:** A nosebleed?

**Cabbie:** Yeah, one time I had ham on one day, and Italian sausage the next, and breakfast sausage, and a pork roast, and some chitterlings. About a week later, I had a nosebleed.

**Alison:** Hmmm...

**Cabbie:** One day, I sat down and ate a whole roast.

**Alison:** See, you are trying to kill yourself.

**Cabbie:** You don't know me. I can't resist a sale. I got that roast for 98 cents a pound. I couldn't believe it. I go to the market every day. It's never been that cheap.

**Alison:** And you ate the whole thing?

**Cabbie:** I didn't know I ate the whole thing. I was too drunk to remember. I woke up and thought, "Damn, I left the roast in the oven." So, I went to get it out. There wasn't even gravy left.

**Alison:** Because you ate it?

**Cabbie:** Yeah, I ate the whole thing. That's why I take notes.

**Alison:** Notes?

**Cabbie:** Yeah, you got to take notes when you drink, so when you black out, nobody can say that you acted crazy the night before. You got everything written down.

**Alison:** You drink until you black out?

**Cabbie:** Not all the time I don't... I got a problem... I can't drink nothing else.

**Alison:** Huh?

**Cabbie:** I can't take the chemicals they put in water. I swell up and get all itchy. Get bumps all over me. Can't drink no water, no milk,

no juice, no nothing.

**Alison:** What do you drink?

**Cabbie:** Got to drink beer made the old-fashioned way. They say it's made with spring water, and they're the only ones that ain't lying. I tried every kind of water, tap water, spring water, I tried this kind and that kind.

**Alison:** They all have chemicals? **Cabbie:** Yup. It's some kind of thing to kill bacteria. And they all have it. That's why I got to drink old-fashioned.

**Alison:** Have you tried distilled water?

**Cabbie:** Yup.

**Alison:** Did you try a Brita filter? **Cabbie:** I tried a Brita, some kind of Culligan system, and my friend paid \$1200 for his system, and he brought me over to try it. Nope. Swelled up.

**Alison:** Unbelievable.

**Cabbie:** I've been living like this for 27 years. I can't drink nothing.

**Alison:** Have you ever had allergy testing?

**Cabbie:** I tried everything. Doctors told me I had eczema, they told me I had acne, one guy told me I had skin cancer.

**Alison:** How did you figure it out? I mean, water is in everything.

**Cabbie:** Well, once when I was on welfare, I got an extra check, and I was drinking for days and days. I just kept going and my skin cleared up. I couldn't believe it. No one could believe it. Then, after a while, I drank some water, and the whole thing happened again. My girlfriend woke up and saw me, and started screaming I was so swollen up.

I don't know exactly what the fates wanted me to learn, but I do know this was no coincidence.

>>> *Alison Hell*

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## prissteeens in synch

With a sound that falls somewhere in the no-man's land between the sweetness of the Shangri La's and the raw nastiness of the Dead Boys, New York City's Prissteeens have been hometown faves almost since day one, which was only about two years ago. A&R types quickly got hip to the foursome, resulting in its recent signing to Almo Sounds, home to Garbage, among others. Now the Prissteeens are in the studio recording their debut disc—working title: *Scandal, Controversy, And Romance*—with producer Richard Gottetzer (Blondie, the Go-Go's, Link Wray).

While bassist and lead singer Lori Yorkman sings and re-sings Wreckless Eric's "Whole Wide World" in the recording booth, guitarists Leslie Day and Tina Canellas talk about the birth of the band. Since three of the four are bartenders at popular East Village bars, they were bound to meet, and that's pretty much what happened. "Oh, who are we kidding," Canellas laughs. "We all had one night stands with each other."

"That would be terrifying," Day snorts.

While drummer Joe Vincent (ex-Devil Dogs) had worked at his trade for years, the other three had limited experience. In fact, Yorkman had none. But Day helped her out. "The week I met [Lori], I lent her my bass. I was like, 'Here, learn this.'" This relative lack of experience turned out to be a bonding thing for the Prissteeens, and while none of the members are pulling Yngwie-style solos, all of them are now capable musicians. Their songs are simple, charming and incredibly catchy.

"I'm so proud of everybody. They got so great so fast," Vincent beams. "I think we were kind of groping for about a year. You know, 'What are we going to do with these four ingredients? Am I going to make a cake with this, am I going to make a soufflé? We got the recipe now.'"

"Just don't leave that cake out in the rain," Day cracks.

As talk turns to menstrual synchronization—while Yorkman and Day are in synch, so far Canellas's ovaries refuse to budge—it becomes immediately clear that being the only male in the band has its advantages and disadvantages. Vincent looks across the table at his foxy guitarists. "It was weird because I went from being the cutest guy in [the Devil Dogs] to being in this band, where I've got stiff competition."



"You're still the cutest guy," Day grins back at her bandmate.

Even though his ego may have taken a battering, Vincent is looking at the bright side of things. "I'm learning so much," he deadpans. "I'm like Jane Goodall among the primates. This is like a reconnaissance mission. Someday I'm gonna write a handbook for guys—'Let me tell you what I learned... I hung out with them... I had dinner with them...' All this inside information has taught him some crucial lessons. "What's most important?" he ponders. "Shoes, I guess." >>> *Judy McGuire*

## weird record

If you've ever fiddled with the dial of a short-wave radio, you've probably happened on a few of the "numbers stations"—frequencies that are just voices reading lists of numbers, sometimes punctuated with snatches of music. People tend to treat them as just so much noise; in fact, they're one of the primary tools of international espionage, a way to send coded messages to agents in the field, without using telephone, email or anything else that can be traced. (It is technically illegal to listen to them in the UK.)

**The Conet Project**  
Recordings of Shortwave Numbers Stations



Assembled by a group called the European Numbers Information Gathering and Monitoring Association, or ENGIMA, The Conet Project (Irdial-Discs) is an insanely complete documentation of numbers stations: four CDs, including recordings of every known station, as well as historical recordings from the '70s and the collapse of the Soviet Union—152 recordings in all. It also has a lengthy, detailed booklet whose paranoia seems justified. >>> *Douglas Wolf*

“ We used to joke about creating a rumor that he and I are gay lovers. Then his autobiography came out, and I'm going, 'What the hell is this all about?' But at the end of the day, the guy's got a shelf life left of about a year and a half if he wants to dress up like a clown and jump around and be Mr. Scary.”

>>> Dave Navarro, on Marilyn Manson's claim that Navarro once offered him oral sex



## label profile

"It's Ecstatic Jazz because that's how it makes the in-tune Listener feel," proclaims New York City independent label AUM Fidelity on its website ([www.aumfidelity.com](http://www.aumfidelity.com)). Since

late last year, with the release of tenor saxophonist David S. Ware's *Wisdom Of Uncertainty* and bassist William Parker's *Sunrise In The Tone World*, the label has picked up where its proprietor, Steven Joerg, left off at Homestead Records, where he oversaw releases by Ware, Parker, drummer William Hooker, pianist Matthew Shipp and other members of NYC's contemporary jazz underground. "The life-affirming energy in the music of New York's master musicians compelled me to present this music in all of its undiluted glory while treating the artists with the requisite respect," explains Joerg of AUM's beginnings. Other recent releases include titles from guitarist Joe Morris, *Other Dimensions In Music* (a collective that features Parker) and drummer Whit Dickey.

**AUM**  
FIDELITY



## inspirational verse

"People used to make records/As in a record of an event/The event of people/Playing music in a room/Now everything is cross-marketing/It's about sunglasses and shoes/or guns or drugs"

>>> Ani DiFranco, "Fuel"



## scanner IN MY ROOM

- **PLU+**
- The Ice Storm
- STEVE RICH
- box set
- **MCN I ORGANISP**
- "when it works"
- **SHOG**
- Royal Slip On trainers
- KANZINE
- Kool Man: Robert Dupree, The King Of Oral Love

## snowpony

### horsemen of the apocalypse

The London cafe is dark and creepy, with a table at its center that's so long, only armor-clanking knights could truly appreciate it. All told, it's the perfect dungeony atmosphere for a talk with the slightly sinister Katharine Gifford, an ex-Stereolab keyboardist whose new trio Snowpony—and its Radioactive debut, *The Slow-Motion World Of Snowpony*—is as texturally dark and creepy as they come. What floats her aesthetic boat? It figures that it would have to be something like pernicious disease.

"I think tsetse flies are very interesting. They live in Africa, and a friend of mine was there and she wrote me a letter saying she'd had tsetse flies, which lay eggs on your clothes. So when you put your clothes on they bury into your skin until they hatch. And you have this big weeping sore afterwards. It's not life-threatening," she clarifies. "It's just completely disgusting. And parasites are quite curious as well. When I was at school, nits was the big one in London—head lice. But our family never got nits—we had *worms* instead! Still, we were quite proud that we never had nits."

*Slow-Motion* is equally infectious and equally insidious. From the slinky opening riff of "Dalston," which celebrates Gifford's seedy London neighborhood, the disc infiltrates your system like some sneaky streptococcus. Underscored by former My Bloody Valentine bassist Debbie Googe and Roller skate Skinny/Quickspace drummer Max Corradi, the bandleader's keyboard programming and smooth, sepulchral murmur are Gothic-tinged and fevered. Which takes Gifford right back to her pet subject, and that false feeling of security that first swept the world when Jonas Salk developed his polio vaccine in the mid-'50s. "People's attitudes towards mortality itself have changed so much since then," she notes. "This idea is prevalent that if you eat the right food, do the right exercise and look both ways when you cross the street, you'll live forever. And some people turn around and say, 'Well, you've got cancer because you're an angry person, and you've repressed all your anger.' Which is blaming the person for their mortality, rather than simply accepting the fact that everyone dies."

Not every symptom deserves a medical nomenclature, Gifford sighs. "My mother got really upset when my grandfather died. He was an old man of 83, who died in the hospital having an emergency operation. And they put down on his death certificate that he died of heart disease, and she was really annoyed that they couldn't just write down 'old age.' Which is what he *did* die of. It wasn't the result of something against nature." Sure, diseases are fascinating, she concludes. "But now the view is that they're outside human nature, and we can fight them and conquer." Nope, Gifford counters. Not so. "People are still going to die, whatever you do."

>>> Tom Lanham



## amazing royal crowns

"Uh, I guess we're rockabilly punk," explains King Kendall, the tattooed singer of Providence, Rhode Island's Amazing Royal Crowns. But he doesn't sound quite sure. "Actually, we're punk rockabilly, or rockabilly punk," he says with a bit more certainty after pausing to reconsider. The truth, however, is slightly more complicated: With their upright bass, Gretsch hollow-body guitars and slicked-back greaser hair, the Amazing Royal Crowns look like a rockabilly band, but they came out of the all-ages hardcore scene, they play with the testosterone-fueled intensity of punk (they regularly cover the Misfits' "American Nightmare") and, oddest of all, they've been adopted by the Northeast's burgeoning ska underground.

"Well, for us, I think, ska and punk bring out the same energy as rockabilly—maybe not traditional rockabilly, but rockabilly played with a punk attitude," offers Kendall, whose busy touring schedule (190 dates in 1997) has left him apartmentless, forcing him to conduct this interview from a pay phone in Providence. "It makes people wanna dance, you know what I mean? We are very into crowds dancing. We're not a shoegazer band. We just fit in with that whole ska/punk crowd. I mean, it was really a natural thing for the Mighty Mighty Bosstones to take us out on tour with them last year."

That tour was a big break for the Crowns, who had won WBCN's annual Rock And Roll Rumble (a long-standing Boston battle of the bands whose past winners include Til Tuesday and Gang Green) in '97 and sold out the first pressing (1000 copies) of their self-titled debut album on their own Kingdom label. The disc was re-released last year on the Boston indie Monolith, and subsequently moved another 9000 units nationally. And in April *The Amazing Royal Crowns* will get a third major label, reissues it—unchanged—once again.

The album is more straightforwardly rockabilly than Kendall might lead you to believe, with its clean, reverbed, buzz 'n' twang riffs; chug 'n' swing backbeats; walking bass lines; mad-daddy vocals, replete with occasional hiccup, and tunes about hot rods ("1965 G.T.O.") and



## pomade punks

cool guitars ("Gretsch"). The disc's catchiest number, "Do The Devil," does quote the Ramones ("Hey ho, let's go!"), but it's jacked up by a slapback guitar riff that owes more to Eddie Cochran than Johnny Ramone—think a rawer Stray Cats without the flashy fretwork—and embellished with some punchy R&B sax work, courtesy of the horn section from ska band Spring Heeled Jack.

On stage, however, the Crowns get in touch with their inner punk, and do their best to avoid rockabilly clichés. "We won't cover anything that's popular with the rockabilly crowd, like 'Tear It Up,' 'Blue Suede Shoes' or 'Lonesome Train,'" Kendall emphasizes. "We'd rather do a Misfits tune because that really has more to do with where we're coming from."

>>> *Matt Ashare*

## buzz words

**Armchair Electronica.** Sometimes referred to as "Bedroom Electronica," this lies at the opposite end of the electronic music spectrum from raver's techno. In fact, the armchair version tends to be more experimental and meandering; a good model is Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Volume II*. Other prototypical armchair works come from the likes of the Orb, Autechre and U-Ziq. Here's an easy armchair-o-meter: Throw a disc in your player and have a seat; if your feet stay still and your fingers don't tap, it's probably armchair.

**tours  
we'd like  
to see**

### Under The Bed Tour:

Furry Things, Number One Cup, T-Shirt, Ex-Action Figures, Squirrel Nut Zippers, Promise Ring, Red Krayola, Squirtgun, Shoestings.

“Ten or eleven years ago, when Slippery hit, I was very excited about being on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. Then their reporter turned up, and all she could talk about was, 'You're so cute. And your hair! I thought to myself: If you want to fuck me, let's just get on with it. I was so angry about all of that. But what could I do? Scar my face? Knock my teeth out?'”

>>> Jon Bon Jovi, ♫ the burdens of a pretty face

# DAVID POE

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## inspirational verse

"Norman Fell/Pick him up/Mr. Ropers, I'm Mr. roped"

>>> Cap'n Jazz, "Rocky Rocooco"

ROBERT SCHMIDER



apples in  
stereo

IN MY  
ROOM

• HIGH LEMMAS

Nomads

• BEJL'AH

Beulah

• MIA AND THE FAMILY RITINE

A Whole New Thing

• BROADCAST

Work And Non Work

• ELUO

Greatest Hits

## random fact

If the resurgence in popularity of Trio's "Da Da Da," following its inclusion in a Volkswagen commercial, is any indication of the car company's star-making ability, Spiritualized should look out: The psychedelic-trance band's song "Ladies And Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space" will soon appear in VW's TV ads.

## long beach dub all-stars

### sublime rememberance

For almost 15 minutes, Sublime's ubiquitous mascot, Louie the Dalmatian, is the only member of the Long Beach Dub All Stars to be found in the group's dressing room at the Snocore Tour. The dog is getting restless, whining at the closed door whenever voices sound in the long hallway outside, listening intently for his master's voice. Once, that voice belonged to Brad Nowell, Sublime's late frontman and primary songwriter. These days, wherever Lou Dog goes, Mike "Miguel" Happoldt is never far behind.



Happoldt co-founded Skunk Records with Nowell, and in addition to being label CEO and in-house engineer, became an important contributor and idea man in Sublime. After Nowell died from a heroin overdose in May 1996, Sublime's old practice space in Long Beach, California, bore this promise on one of its spray-painted walls: "Your Music Lives On." Less than a year after Nowell's death, the Long Beach Dub All Stars were already fulfilling that vow.

The remaining core of Sublime—Happoldt, drummer Bud Gaugh, bassist Eric Wilson and DJ/percussionist "Field" Marshall Goodman—filled the All Stars' lineup, along with loyal band supporters and friends. Vocalist Opie Ortiz had for years produced art and tattoos for the group and keyboardist Jack Mannis played on Sublime's *40 Oz. To Freedom*; guitarist Ras 1 and saxophonist Tim Wu are newer members.

AFTER NOWELL DIED, SUBLIME'S OLD PRACTICE SPACE BORE THIS PROMISE ON ONE OF ITS SPRAY-PAINTED WALLS: "YOUR MUSIC LIVES ON." LESS THAN A YEAR LATER, THE LONG BEACH DUB ALL STARS WERE FULFILLING THAT VOW.

The All Stars' chemistry, like Sublime's, relies on spontaneous combustion. It's no surprise, then, to see the group live playing a Descendents cover ("Myage") before deconstructing the Grateful Dead's "Scarlet Begonias" with ska rhythms and Goodman's raw turntable scratches. "We know so many songs between each of us that anything can happen," says Happoldt.

Seemingly, anything *can* happen. After the Snocore tour (with the Aquabats, Blink-182 and headliners Primus), the All Stars head to Europe—"It's something Brad and Bud and Eric never got to do," explains Happoldt—and plans are underway for the group to back Jamaican dancehall vocalist Barrington Levy in the studio later this year. Solidifying his place in the hip-hop community, Goodman recently worked with the Pharcyde and Born Jamericans, while Del Noah and the Mt. Ararat Finks, a group Wilson plays stand-up bass with, will release a new record soon. Meanwhile, Skunk continues to grow, releasing more records this year and forming a distribution arm, Cornerstone, which will put out a new record by the Ziggens, one of Happoldt's favorite bands.

Whenever the All Stars find time this year, Happoldt says, they'll record their own debut. Former Bad Brains vocalist HR, who joined the group on stage earlier in '98, might make a guest appearance on the album. For Happoldt, the on-stage meeting was a moving experience: "His music and lyrics are the closest things I've ever known to prayer."

>>> Mark Woodlief



## Q&A clutch®

Clutch recently spent eight weeks on the road (promoting the band's new album, *The Elephant Riders* (Columbia)) with Sevendust and Limp Bizkit as part of the "Ladies Night In Cambodia" tour, which admits the first 250 free. We caught up with the band's vocalist, Neal Fallon, during the tour's second week. >>> *Jenny Eliscu*

**Q:** Do a lot of ladies show up for your shows?

**A:** There are more females at these shows than have ever been to any other shows. More and more, we get more girls, but for awhile we were strictly a man's band. Which kind of bummed us out after awhile.

**Q:** Do you think there's a perception that the kind of music you make—and even Limp Bizkit and Sevendust, too—that it's just guy-rock?

**A:** I think that's definitely a perception. I guess there is an element of truth to it as well. However, I certainly don't want just guys to come to the show. The more the merrier. We play with so many different bands at this point that our crowds have gotten pretty diverse. Along the way, more and more females have come to our shows, which makes us feel more gentle.

**Q:** Sometimes I look out at the crowd at a show where it's really loud and crazy and I think, "Are these people really listening?" Do you ever think that?

**A:** [sighs] You know, sometimes it's like the front, the pit, the pit, it becomes such a feature of the show that the first row will have to turn their backs on us so they can make sure they don't get a boot in the head. And that really irritates me. This whole moshing thing, it's all well and fine in itself, but it does get old. I mean a lot of these kids are just jocks and are just using it as a vehicle to beat someone up. And that's ridiculous. I mean it's about music. I could say it's art and all that, but you know, that would sound kind of high-falutin'. But it is. It is art. Sometimes it just becomes more like a football match. I can understand that they want to get out their aggressions but sometimes it becomes very barbaric.

**Q:** Do you feel like there's some sort of a great divide between people who listen to punk rock and loud rock, even though they're essentially similar?

**A:** Punk rock is like, even though it sometimes tries to pass itself off as being anti-establishment, it is very, very strict in its rules to what you can and can't do to be punk. Loud rock radio listeners, they just want to be entertained. They listen to a band on the radio, that's good enough for them.

# The Maxell Mix Tape

We all MAKE UP TAPES of our favorite songs. They're driving companions, records of ill-spent summers, letters to girlfriends or boyfriends, whatever. What's your favorite mix? Tell Us. And if we pick your entry, the kind folks at Maxell will send you a bunch of goodies.

This Month's Winner Is

Yan Espino!!

SEASIDE, NJ

### SIDE ONE:

Land Of The Loops  
Welcome  
Sebadob  
Prince-S  
Lynnfield Pioneers  
Too To Go  
Magoo  
A To Z And Back Again  
Prinos Paul  
DJ Prince Paul Vs. The World  
Photek  
The Third Sequence  
Sloan  
G Turns To D  
Apples In Stereo  
Get There Fine  
Radiohead  
Airbag  
Run On  
As Good As New  
Tillyah Kuryahkin  
Nomeo  
Lols  
W.O. Style

### SIDE TWO:

5ive Style  
Once Around The Park  
Primal Scream  
Kowalski  
Silkworm  
Never Met A Man I Didn't Like  
Barbara Manning  
That Kid  
Chris Knox  
The Joy Of Sex  
Sun Ra  
Medicine For A Nightmare  
Rakin  
When I'm Flowin'  
Divine Comedy  
A Woman Of The World  
Air  
Sexy Boy  
Wayne Hancock  
That's What Daddy Wants  
Wheat  
Death Car

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Mix it up!

CMJ NEW MUSIC



# maxell



**DATALOG**  
 RELEASED MAR. 24.  
 WEBSITE AT WWW.PHPAD.COM/WHITLEY.  
**FILE UNDER**  
 HAUNTED ACOUSTIC BLUES.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER,  
 RICHARD BUCKNER, RECENT DYLAN.

## chris whitley

### Dirt Floor Messenger

Chris Whitley has offered teasers of his solo acoustic sound throughout his career; *Dirt Floor*, though, is his first full-fledged solo acoustic release. Recorded quickly on a two-track in Whitley's father's Vermont barn, *Dirt Floor* leaves the spaces in the songs that his much-loved debut album washed over. You can almost hear the fire crackling and the wind blowing as Whitley stomps his boot and plays his banjo or trademark National Steel guitar, and you can see the barn he's sitting in: Images of broken-down engine parts, tools and machinery chase the demons of love, sex and God that populate his songs. Most tracks, such as the pulsating "Scrapyard Lullaby" and meditative "Accordingly," use circular single line patterns and avoid the power chords Whitley's recently favored. The songs buzz and drone, all tension and no release, and as such the brief half-hour is completely fulfilling; it's long enough to dwell with the spirits that *Dirt Floor* conjures. Whitley's no blues neo-traditionalist, his songs avoid cliché at every turn, and their mysteries untangle slowly. Similar to, say, PJ Harvey, Chris Whitley contorts the blues tradition into something completely personal and contemporary; it's a darkly brilliant feat.

>>> Steve Klinge



**DATALOG**  
 RELEASE DATE: APR. 7.  
**FILE UNDER**  
 RAUCOUS, NAVAL-GAZING PUNK.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 THE HUMBERS, STOOGES,  
 VINTAGE ROLLING STONES,  
 GUN CLUB.

## new bomb turks

### At Rope's End Epitaph

The pride of Columbus, Ohio, New Bomb Turks have never exactly been your garden-variety, pogo-fodder punk band. There's always been a deep-rooted structure to their riffs, a few too many years of college evident in singer Eric Davidson's words, and more humanity than the "I'm a drunken loser" tricks of the average modern punk band. On their last album (and their Epitaph debut), 1996's *Scared Straight*, the Turks started varying tempos, and sneaking in some distinctly un-punk sonic touches like horns and keyboards. With *At Rope's End*, they deepen this diversification. The R&B in the groove in tunes like "Defiled" might bring to mind the MC5, and the screechy horns-and-feedback midsection has the feel of avant-jazz. "Bolan's Crash" examines the healthiness of rock's death cult obsessiveness to a tune that owes much to the Stones' Mick Taylor-era, while "Raw Law" shakes its hips like that band's best party platters. Meantime, Davidson is sounding less like an educated wiseass and more like a young man on the precipice of his 30s, wondering "Is this it?!" Doubt (both self- and otherwise), disillusion and introspection inform this record like a nagging toothache. With *At Rope's End*, the New Bomb Turks may just have cut their *Sticky Fingers* or *Beggar's Banquet*. Which means *Let It Bleed* or *Exile* is around the corner.

>>> Tim Stagall



**DATALOG**  
 RELEASE DATE: APR. 14.  
**FILE UNDER**  
 SOULFUL ACOUSTIC POP.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL,  
 FIONA APPLE, JONI MITCHELL.

## ebba forsberg

### Been There Maverick

From a lyrical point of view, Swedish newcomer Ebba Forsberg could not have titled her album anything else—nor, as a matter of fact, could she have distanced herself any further from the musical genius of that other Swedish delicacy, Abba. More than likely an abbreviated form of that popular phrase (or perhaps, an allusion to a British duo—keep reading), *Been There* is a compelling first album steeped in soulful, occasionally jazzy, acoustic pop rhythms that wickedly recall Everything But The Girl; that is, before the duo discovered the joys of clubbing. The lyrics, too, bear the indelible influence of EBTG, with melancholic confusion, painful exploration and broken promises forming the stark foundation. But while Tracey Thorn's storytelling is painfully sad, Forsberg's is painfully optimistic. After one listen to *Been There*, it becomes readily apparent that she has been there, done that and packed her bags, and is moving on. Some lessons learned include: There is life after despair ("Lost Count"); ask and you shall receive ("Hold Me"); forgive in the face of love ("I'll Do Fine"). Throughout, it is Forsberg's ultra-rich singing style that remains in the spotlight—that, and her sincere belief in a brighter day.

>>> Michael Paoletta

## dirty three

### Ocean Songs Touch And Go

Can you make a concept album without any lyrics? If you're the Dirty Three you can. *Ocean Songs*, the instrumental trio's fourth—and best—album to date is a lilting travelogue that ebbs and flows like the tides, conveying the beauty and isolation of life at sea that even a poet would have trouble verbalizing. *Ocean Songs'* cavernous sounds and brilliant use of space recall the group's first album, 1995's *Sad & Dangerous*. The wildly varying dynamics and experimental asides of *S&D* are absent here, but in their place is a more consistent, quietly intense song cycle. At times the intensity isn't so quiet: On tracks like "Backwards Voyager" and "Deep Waters," the Three's arrival at fever pitch is so gradual, so hypnotic, that it's easy to coast right past the fact that they're beating the living tar out of their instruments. Violinist Warren Ellis, guitarist Mick Turner and drummer Jim White have nurtured an inter-group dialogue matched only by the most intuitive jazz combos, and all but absent in a rock context. *Ocean Songs* is a work of rare inspiration, a document of three individuals at the absolute peak of their talents. >>> Matt Hanks



**CATALOG**  
RELEASED MAR. 31.  
**FILE UNDER**  
INSTRUMENTAL POETRY.  
**R.T.V.L.**  
TORTOSE, SOWWY  
SHARROCK, MAHAVISHNU  
ORCHESTRA.

### Solex Vs. The Hitmeister Matador

Solex is one person, Elisabeth Esselink from Amsterdam, who builds her recordings out of lurching, unfamiliar loops, and buries her own skinny, strongly accented voice deep within the mix. What she comes up with is utterly cool and original. From old dub, she's picked up a sense of regular but uneven rhythm, as well as a knack for dropping little sonic treats in the mix every few seconds. A few songs, particularly "Solex In A Slipshod Style," hint at the creepy cycles and smothered pain of Portishead, and that's about it for identifiable antecedents to what she's doing on this debut. Esselink's tracks eschew the too-pure organization of dance music in favor of surprise and variety. When she uses things that wouldn't seem out of place in dance tracks (like the pop-and-flex drums that drive "Rolex By Solex"), in fact, she combines them with things that would: a loud fragment of classical guitar, beats in a different orientation, discordant voices. It's clear that her first language isn't the English she's singing in, and her accent and unusual phrasings contribute to the overall strangeness. It doesn't matter that her words are largely undecipherable, because they're mostly a vehicle for her voice as an instrument, and her sense of sonic montage finds new and delightful uses for uncanny sounds. >>> Douglas Wolk



**CATALOG**  
RELEASED MAR. 10.  
**FILE UNDER**  
ODD, ENCHANTING  
LOOP-SONGS  
**R.T.V.L.**  
PORTISHEAD, CIBO  
MATTO, BUFFALO  
DAUGHTER.

## richard davies

### Telegraph Flydaddy

Australian native Richard Davies has emerged from his early garage-pop band the Moles and his critically acclaimed follow-up group Cardinal, a one-off project with arranger Eric Matthews, as one of the more compelling songwriters of our day. His songs have been compared to those of psychedelic pop archetypes such as Love, the Beach Boys circa *Pet Sounds* and Nick Drake, but with his second solo album, Davies once again takes his collection of familiar rock baggage to fresh, new destinations. With a spare production similar to that of his solo debut, 1995's *There's Never Been A Crowd Like This*, Davies (with help from guitarist and co-producer Ronald Jones, of the Flaming Lips) keeps the spotlight on his songs and their essential presentation ingredients: Davies's vocals and self harmonies, and delicate acoustic guitar strums. Embellishments from piano, a bit of horns, electric guitar and a subtle rhythm section only support the wistful moods concocted by the songs, and poetic phrases such as "In the end, all my blues are red again" ("Crystal Clear") echo the tone. Even decorated in the spangles and jangle of the psychedelic era, Davies's songs are never overcome by their retro attitude, instead marking the clear self-expression of a songwriter and performer at the top of his game. >>> Lydia Vanderloo



**CATALOG**  
RELEASED MAR. 24.  
**FILE UNDER**  
PRISTINE PSYCH-POP.  
**R.T.V.L.**  
ERIC MATTHEWS, NICK  
DRAKE, REVOLVER



JOHN CLARK

## quasi

The steady pound of a Roxichord organ—a '70s electronic harpsichord—fuels the music of Quasi; it provides the bass and the backbone to the Portland, Oregon, duo's mutated pop, and its distorted timbre drives most of the melodies, breaks and hooks. Consisting of primary instrumentalist and singer Sam Coomes (formerly of the Donner Party and Heatmiser) and drummer Janet Weiss (who also pounds for Sleater-Kinney), Quasi forges dense, wonderfully bouncy three-minute organ and guitar freakouts. Last year's *R&B Transmogrification* contained these nearly giddy ditties, but underneath the candy coated sheen were dirges about death, heartbreak and failure (perhaps, it must be said, because the two members were recovering from their recent divorce while continuing to perform as a band). The recent follow-up, *Featuring "Birds"* (Up), has a more glossy feel to it, and some of the burden of failure has been lifted, but what's left is just as emotionally honest. The Roxichord still drives nearly everything, and Weiss plays a more prominent role than she did before, harmonizing along to Coomes's roller-coaster voice.

>>> Randall Roberts

## guster

The meteoric rise of Boston-based trio Guster is no fluke. Without the help of a hit video or single, the band built up a bevy of cultish fans who have been scooping up copies of Guster's second independent album *Goldfly* (20,000 and counting) since its release last March. The group's on-stage reputation earned it "Best Live Act" accolades at the 1997 Boston Music Awards, but its secret lies in its relationship with its fans: With a relentless tour schedule, Guster has gathered hundreds of loyal followers to act as reps for its grassroots marketing campaign. The success of the band's efforts has led to the trio inking with Sire Records, which has just re-released *Goldfly*. Led by Ryan Miller, the group writes sturdy, evocative rock songs, built around mostly acoustic guitar lines and bongos and backed by effective vocal harmonies, occasionally recalling the Dave Matthews Band. Phish and Rusted Root are some of the other bands you'll hear mentioned in the same breath as Guster by fans and critics—not as much for sonic similarities as for the trio's ability to carve out its own distinctive niche without the aid of the music industry machine.

>>> Glen Sansone



## lee feldman

Lee Feldman is one of a vanishing breed: a literate, intriguing songwriter who sits at the piano and plays songs that are entertaining, witty and brimming with wry humor and creative wordplay. Out of the gate, most people are comparing Lee Feldman to early Randy Newman; and while that does hold a bit of truth—after all, both wear glasses and write very peculiar lyrics—it doesn't really do justice to where Feldman is coming from. He's not quite as dark and bracing as Newman, and he's more about celebrating people's frailties and foibles than putting them down. Feldman has been honing his craft in small clubs, and he released his debut album, *Living It All Wrong* (Pure-Mercury), last year. That's just the beginning, though: Keep in mind how long it took for people to figure out the greatness of Tom Waits and Randy Newman, and keep your eye on Lee.

>>> James Lien



# pure feverish



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MONMOUTH COUNTY



PROMISE RING, GNEWIKOW, THIRD FROM LEFT

# emo- core



FAIR, MATRANGOLA, SECOND FROM LEFT

**i**f there is one thing more difficult than defining emo-core, it is finding a band willing to admit its involvement. Although emo-core's roots can be traced to the mid-'80s hardcore days of Dischord Records, the style has been the subject of increasing attention in the last four years. And now, with the news that emo paragon Sunny Day Real Estate has reformed, the style is sure to receive even wider recognition. But even Sunny Day, the band that lifted the style to new heights in terms of both creativity and popularity, winces at the mention of the word. Speaking through its manager, the notoriously press-shy band commented: "Sunny Day Real Estate won't deny that they're in the emo genre but they feel Rites Of Spring should be credited with pioneering that."

Literally, emo-core is a term for emotionally expressive punk rock music. While the songs are more melodic than traditional punk, they exude the same sensibility and attitude. Emo, in its purest form, is both anthemic and guttural. When the movement began, emo was what older, disillusioned hardcore kids listened to after they had grown out of the notion that they could conquer the world.

Rites Of Spring, which featured guitarist/vocalist Guy Picciotto and drummer Brendan Canty, both now of Fugazi, is widely regarded as the first emo-core band. It was a melodic hardcore group, but what set it apart was the subject matter of its songs. Rather than ranting about revolutions and anger, Picciotto sang about lost love and forgotten memories. Take, for instance, "Theme (If I Started Crying)," from Rites Of Spring's only full-length: "Sometimes when I see a world inside/Sometimes when I try, I really try/And hope's just another rope to hang myself with/To tie me down till something real comes around."

Other bands contemporary to Rites Of Spring, such as 7 Seconds and Embrace, as well as numerous groups that followed in their wake, such as Still Life and Sense Field, helped to cultivate the sound, but it was with Sunny Day Real Estate's debut release in 1994, *Diary* (Sub Pop), that emo began making waves outside the hardcore community. The band's captivating sound fused lead singer Jeremy Enigk's charismatic, angst-ridden delivery and soul-stirring lyrics with the powerful guitar playing of Daniel Hoerner and the driving rhythms of bassist Nate Mendel (now of the Foo Fighters) and drummer William Goldsmith. Sunny Day quickly became one of the most important college rock bands of the '90s, but, proving the cliché that the candle that burns twice as bright burns out twice as fast, the group disbanded in March of 1995.

764-HERO vocalist/guitarist John Atkins, who went to high school with Goldsmith, had a good vantage point from which to judge the impact of Sunny Day Real Estate's music on the emo scene. "I remember going on our first tour and we started noticing that the local opener sounded like Sunny Day almost every night. You can definitely see that Sunny Day had that Velvet Underground appeal where it's like no one heard them, but everyone who did started a band. People heard Sunny Day and were like, 'Wow, you can do that!'"

According to Jeremy Gomez, the bass player for Mineral, Sunny Day's brief career did not limit the impact of their music. "Sunny Day came out of nowhere and changed a lot of people's lives," he says. Gomez claims, however, that it was not Sunny Day Real Estate that led his band, which has always been dogged by the emo label, towards the genre. "We kind of fell on the scene by accident," he recalls via telephone from his home in Austin, Texas. "We got together and started writing songs and then we played a show in Houston with Christie Front Drive. We had never heard of them and they had never heard of us, but it turned out to be a good bill. We were blown away. It was the first time that we realized there were other bands playing a similar musical style."

Soon after, Mineral recorded its first 7" for Christie Front Drive's Audio Concept label and, in the process, dug itself deeper into the scene. By the time the group released *The Power Of Failing on Crank!* in 1996, it was already one of the most celebrated post-Sunny Day emo-core outfits. Following the album's release, Mineral inked a deal with Interscope Records, but a desire to branch out led to last year's premature break up. "I just personally felt that I had accomplished everything that I wanted to in Mineral," explains Gomez. "I thought the direction that we would have gone from there would have either been stagnant or we would have gone into a direction I wasn't really into." Despite his resistance to accepting the emo-core tag, Gomez acknowledges that he benefited from being part of the movement.

"There are a lot of people that like to bash the whole scene, but if it wasn't for that scene, we wouldn't have been as popular as we were."

Mineral touring mate the Promise Ring may be the first group to step away from the scene without losing credibility. Since all four members of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, band had been hardcore kids, and singer Davey Von Bohlen had played in the emo

>>> [Continued on page 20](#)



AMANDA GRAHAM

FEATURING

"GREAT ESCAPE,"

"DEMONS" AND


"AIRPORT SONG" \*

\* on this month's CMJ sampler



# GUSTER GOLDFLY



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# the scene is now

>>> *Continued from page 19*

band Cap'n Jazz (which recently released a posthumous collection of all of its recorded material, *Analphabetaolothology*, on Jade Tree), the Promise Ring was quickly branded as emo. The release of the group's first LP on Jade Tree in 1996, 30' Everywhere, confirmed it. Although these days the band avoids the phrase like the plague, being dubbed emo-core wasn't so disheartening in the beginning. "It's weird. Four years ago it had a completely different meaning," says bassist Jason Gnewikow from his home in Chicago, where he is recuperating from the band's recent van accident. "It's kind of turned into this thing that people shy away from and I can understand why. I think it has gotten so wrong. Punk and hardcore people are very protective of their own and it has kind of been taken away by the outside world like the music industry."


The Promise Ring's latest offering, *Nothing Feels Good* (Jade Tree), is a drastic departure from its previous efforts. A well-crafted power-pop album, it is not so much a reaction against emo as it is a reflection of a shift in the band's musical interests. "When we first started the band it was kind of like the boom of Sunny Day Real Estate," Gnewikow hastens to point out. "I think mostly what influences us to write songs has a lot

to do with what we are listening to, and at that time that was the stuff we were listening to. As an early starting band you are kind of struggling to find how you fit into your own calling, your own sound. After a while you start paying more attention to your songwriting."

Naturally, there are a number of acts around today that did not grow up in and around the emo scene but have learned from and drawn heavily on it. Far, a hard rock quartet from Sacramento, California, credits the style as a sort of guiding light. "For me, it was less an influence than a validation thing," says lead singer Jonah Matranga. "We were sort of moving along in this odd direction, and to hear bands like Quicksand and Sunny Day was like meeting someone else who likes the same weird band you do." Unlike many of his scene-mates, Matranga has no problem owning up to his band's emo-ness. "I love the term, actually," Matranga confesses. "I'm always down for emotion and people that are not afraid to show it."

Even if Sunny Day's next album—due out this fall on Sub Pop—does not have the expected impact, it is doubtful that the emo genre will disintegrate anytime soon. There are plenty of bands stoking the fire, including Karate, Jejuje, Rainer Maria, Pave The Rocket, Brandon, Applesed Cast, Camber and Cursive. There are also just as many acts out there building on or borrowing from it, such as 764-HERO, Trackstar, the Get-Up Kids, Unwound, Knapsack, Jimmy Eat World, Triple Fast Action and, in less obvious ways, Modest Mouse.

According to John Szuich, the founder of Deep Elm Records, the music remains powerful, even as it broadens its parameters. His label documented the movement last year with a compilation titled *What's Mine Is Yours: The Emo Diaries, Chapter One*. (Due to the positive response, Szuich is gearing up for a second, "more somber" collection, *A Million Miles Away: The Emo Diaries, Chapter Two*.)

"Today, emo seems to be growing into more of a scene of all-ages, D.I.Y.-minded kids that appreciate music that comes from the soul, more than any particular style," explains Szuich. "Bands involved in the scene all have their own take on it, some more hardcore, some more dynamic, some more pop, some more math-rock and intellectual, some more screaming and some more rock-based. Whatever works to give me that feeling inside is OK by my standards." 



● "Mother Mary" by Far appears on this month's CD

# ska-lastic aptitude

PURE SKA

SKA-INFLUENCED

NAME	SCHOOL	TERM PROJECT	METHODOLOGY	CLASSMATES
 <p><b>skatalites</b></p>	TRADITIONAL	<p><i>Ball Of Fire</i> (Island Jamaica Jazz)</p>	Pure Jamaican ska, with horns, Afro-Cuban percussion and an upbeat, skipping tempo. Occasional toasting.	Stubborn All-Stars, Hepcat, Jump With Joey, Notables, Franceska
 <p><b>specials</b></p>	TWO-TONE	<p><i>Guilty 'Til Proved Innocent!</i> (Way Cool-MCA)</p>	British ska with a slower, danceable, rock-steady beat. Lyrics emphasize political and social issues. Horns appear on most tracks.	Selector, Inspector 7, Bad Manners
 <p><b>toasters</b></p>	THIRD WAVE	<p><i>Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down</i> (Moon Ska)</p>	American ska, defined more by its time frame (mid- to late-'80s) and nationality than a specific musical style.	Skavooie And The Epitones, Scofflaws, Slackers, Bim Skala Bim, Skinnerbox, Let's Go Bowling
 <p><b>mighty mighty bosstones</b></p>	SKA-CORE	<p><i>Let's Face It</i> (Mercury)</p>	A more punk version of ska that balances horns and kicky tempo with aggressive guitar parts and vocals. Sometimes called ska-metal.	Five Iron Frenzy, Mephiskapheles
 <p><b>reel big fish</b></p>	SKA-POP	<p><i>Turn The Radio Off</i> (Mojo)</p>	Pop songs with a ska beat, horns and a sense of humor.	Save Ferris, Goldfinger
 <p><b>rancid</b></p>	SKA-PUNK	<p>The forthcoming <i>Life Won't Wait</i> (Epitaph)</p>	Punk-pop derived more from hardcore than from ska. Only uses horns on select songs, but relies on "chinka-chinka" guitar parts and fast-paced rhythms.	Less Than Jake, MU330, Mustard Plug, Suicide Machines, Blue Meanies
 <p><b>sugar ray</b></p>	SKA-ALT.ROCK	<p><i>Floored</i> (Atlantic)</p>	Modern rock and pop with tinges of ska influence: groovy rhythms, "chinka-chinka" guitar parts, and occasional horns.	No Doubt, Sublime, Smash Mouth



# MODERN LOVE

>>> BY FRANKLIN BRUNO PHOTOS: RIHO AIHARA 'I HEARD THIS BIZARRE CONVERSATION IN THE HOTEL LOBBY—MAYBE IT WAS A NORMAL LOS ANGELES CONVERSATION.' THE SPEAKER IS THE HYPER-ARTICULATE NICHOLAS CURRIE, KNOWN ON RECORD AS MOMUS. THE LOCATION IS THE EMPTY DINING ROOM AT UPSCALE WEST LA CABARET LUNA PARK, WHERE MOMUS HAS JUST COMPLETED THE FIRST WEST COAST SHOW OF HIS 13-YEAR MUSIC CAREER. CURRIE IS MOVING ON HIS JOB POSITION IN THE POP WORLD: BELOVED BY A GROWING CLOY OF AESTHETES AND MALCONTENTS, DISKLY INFLUENTIAL, YET HARDLY A HOUSEHOLD NAME. 'THESE FILM PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT RESCUE DOGS. THEY WERE CONVINCED THEY COULD MAKE A BIG TELEVISION SPECIAL ABOUT RESCUE DOGS, WHICH WOULD BE TREMENDOUSLY ENTERTAINING. MAYBE THAT'S A VERY SORT OF LA CONVERSATION, AND THEY WERE USING THE TERMS 'ELITIST' AND 'DEMOCRATIC.' THEY SAID 'SUCH AND SUCH IS A REALLY ELITIST IDEA, BUT THE RESCUE DOGS IS REALLY DEMOCRATIC.' AND IN THOSE TERMS, I WOULD SAY I'M ELITIST ENOUGH TO BE HAPPY ONLY INFLUENCING OTHER ARTISTS, OR EVEN TO JUST SELL MY RECORDS TO OTHER ARTISTS.' >>>

# MOMUS



PHOTOGRAPH BY RIHO AIHARA



Currie rubs his eyes (a recent bout with a rare ocular infection requires him to wear an eye patch onstage) and continues: "I see myself as being in some 'research and development' wing of pop music where it doesn't matter if a successful product is ever made from my researches, as long as I'm allowed to be a lifetime research fellow, and go on tinkering with the limits of what pop music is and... how deep it's allowed to go into people's psychology, how serious it's allowed to be, how funny it's allowed to be, how obscene it's allowed to be."

If records are lab reports of a sort, Currie's experiments have been more fruitful than most. Over 13 albums, he's used the Momus persona (or "avatar mask," as one recent song has it) to spit-roast numerous sacred cows, exposing the psychosexual underbelly of Biblical tales, the psychosexual underbelly of Thatcherite (and Blairite) England, the psychosexual underbelly of global technoculture—get the idea?—frequently with a combination of depth and wit that would be surprising in a contemporary novel, much less an alleged "pop" song.

The current Momus release (and the impetus for his first substantial US tour), *Ping Pong* (Le Grand Magistery), offers an ideal introduction to Currie's winning combination of pre-fab Casio drum programs, cabaret melodies and lyrical excess. In addition to such oddities as "Tamagotchi Press Officer" ("Mr. Tamagotchi will speak to no one today/He is asleep") and "Space Jews," which audaciously name-checks both cultural critic Theodor Adorno and Mr. Spock, *Ping Pong* boasts a higher proportion of top-flight Momus material than previous '90s albums. Disturbing, yet charming, songs like "The Animal That Desires" (in which Momus, on the subway, becomes "the only animal that reproduces sexually... dreaming uniquely lewd dreams") and "My Pervert Doppelganger" combine concerns about persona and identity, which date back to Currie's earliest work, with the stylish electro-lounge songcraft of 1995's *The Philosophy Of Momus* and his songs for other artists.

Currie discusses the changes that helped produce the new album: "I felt a bit semi-retired when I was living in Paris. I was married, and we'd run away to escape the unfriendly attentions of my wife's family. I was writing a lot for Japanese singers like Kahimi Karie, and earning a fair bit of money that way, but not really being Momus in a full-time way. And now I'm back to being single again, living in London again, and many of the conditions of being Momus in the first place are reproduced in that kind of lifestyle."

If the bed-sit romantic frustrations that colored 1985's

*Circus Maximus* are any indication, "the conditions of being Momus in the first place" may be a euphemism for "I'm not getting any." But don't be too quick to feel sorry for Currie—he's currently dating a Japanese fashion photographer, and remains on good enough terms with his wife Shazna to be collaborating on an upcoming album (his songs, her voice) as Milky. In any case, "The Animal That Desires" displays a richer, more oblique take on sexual alienation than early, petulant lines like, "Every good boy deserves favor—where's mine?" (not to mention a better hook). Figuratively speaking, it's the flipside of Pulp's "Sheffield: Sex City," in which Jarvis Cocker, an avowed Momus fan, turns an entire city into the body of an elusive woman. (When I mention the similarity to

**"I SEE MYSELF AS BEING IN SOME 'RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT' WING OF POP MUSIC WHERE IT DOESN'T MATTER IF A SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT IS EVER MADE FROM MY RESEARCHES, AS LONG AS I'M ALLOWED TO BE A LIFETIME RESEARCH FELLOW, AND GO ON TINKERING WITH THE LIMITS OF WHAT POP MUSIC IS."**

Currie, he counters that the Pulp song seems to him influenced in turn by his own, much earlier "Closer To You.")

The shift from Paris to "cautious" London has as much to do with *Ping Pong*'s regained focus as any in Currie's personal life. "It was all written in about two months, when I was staying at a friend's house in London. All my boxes were in storage, I was living in someone else's house, and I was just making these songs that went back to the origins of who I was and what my experience of developing the Momus persona was. It was a bit like moving there the first time 'round and living in shitty apartments in Brixton or somewhere.

"London has an alienating effect on me. I still don't feel entirely at home in it as a city... In Montmartre, I could read *Libération* as my daily paper and understand what they're talking about. If I'm in London and read *The Evening Standard*, it's very alien intelligence, so London is a very prickly place for me to live. I'd be more at home in New York or even Los Angeles, because English people are basically pessimistic, while Americans are Nietzschean and optimistic and manic... but I can deal with that positivity. Maybe it's important to live in the place that you don't understand, that you feel uneasy about... I do appreciate the current trendiness of London, though."

Alienation and obscurity aside, Momus's Stateside shows have turned out to be surprisingly engaging affairs, especially given their minimal guitar-and-sequencer set-up. Currie doesn't play a character à la Marilyn Manson on stage—all the Momus-ness is in the texts of the songs. After mentioning that the eye patch is not a tribute to early Hollywood directors, Currie and his cohort, Parisian theremin/sequencer player Gilles Weinzaepflin, toss in a couple of nods to the savvy LA crowd: Bowie's "Cracked Actor" and an audacious rendition of Momus's own "I Was A Maoist Intellectual (In the Music Industry)," with a guileless audience member recruited to play human beatbox. Throughout, Weinzaepflin hams shamelessly, holding his theremin's antenna to his chest like an arrow as

>>> [Continued on page 52](#)

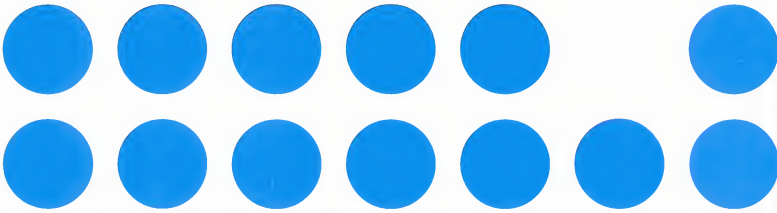




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MORCHEEBA

LOOK  
BACK

IN LANGUOR

**"ALL ENGLISH MUSIC IS STOLEN FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE," SAYS MORCHEEBA'S ROSS GODFREY, RECLINING IN THE CONTROL ROOM OF HIS BANO'S STUDIO, IN THE CLAPHAM SECTION OF SOUTH LONDON. "THERE'S NO TRUE ENGLISH PEOPLE, BECAUSE WE'RE JUST A MISHMASH OF ALL THE DIFFERENT PEOPLE WHO'VE INVADDED OVER THE CENTURIES." GODFREY IS EXPLAINING HOW HE CAME TO BE IN A HIP-HOP BAND WHILE GROWING UP IN SALTWOOD, A SMALL TOWN IN KENT, NEAR THE PRESENT LOCATION OF THE CHANNEL TUNNEL. "YEAH, WE WERE OPPRESSED, HONESTLY," HE LAUGHS. "I THINK THERE WERE ABOUT FOUR PEOPLE IN OUR TINY LITTLE VILLAGE WHO WOULD WEAR PUFF JACKETS AND GO AROUND AND LISTEN TO RUN-D.M.C. AND BREAKDANCE AND SPRAY GRAFFITI ON THE LOCAL TRAINS."**

Godfrey, 21, moved to London when he was 15 to attend a music college. He didn't really like it, but it was a way out of a small-town torpor that was already threatening to envelop his older brother, Paul. "He'd been living with a girl down there for ages and had a job at a studio, and eventually that kind of fell apart and he had a semi-nervous breakdown and I convinced him to come up." The brothers got an apartment together, immediately went on the dole and began to try to reconcile their love for country and urban music. They started to draw sporadic label attention. "We'd do an instrumental track with a hip-hop beat and a blues slide guitar, and they'd love it," Ross says, "and they'd pay for some studio time. And then we'd make like this country song with live drums and pedal steel and banjos. You know, 'This is what we've just spent your thousand pounds on,' and they'd say, 'Sorry, you're mad.'"

It wasn't until the Godfreys met Skye Edwards at a party in Greenwich later that year that they found a vocation other than annoying major labels. "She came up to us and tried to sell us a drum kit," Ross recalls. "She said she sang backup in a funk band, and that she played guitar, and we were quite interested." Coincidentally, Edwards started dating one of the Godfreys' roommates, Justin. After some pestering, she eventually brought her acoustic guitar over and sang for them. "She sang so quietly, you could hardly hear it, but it was just beautiful, you know, like absolute sweet molasses of the voice." The Godfreys quickly booked some studio time. They recorded "Trigger Hippie," the sort of record that more or less forces reviewers to use words like "languid" and "mottled," at a very fortuitous time. "It was around the same time as Portishead sold like half a million in America, and from all these record companies saying we were mad, they suddenly turned around and said, 'You're completely right, there's a huge market for this, how much money do you want?'"

The trio decided to take the offer of China Records (best known previously as the home to the Art Of Noise), because it was willing to let Morcheeba build its own studio and to record and produce an album on its own. And a darn nice studio it is, at that. Not too fancy, but more than adequate, it boasts an old Roman

well that the group uses as a verb tank, houses numerous old keyboards and, most importantly, is a lot more comfortable than the places your average bidding-war-winning band ends up recording. Friends' paintings hang on the walls, along with posters from Steven Stills and Jimi Hendrix records and paraphernalia from the '60s cult TV show *The Prisoner*. "Yeah, Paul wears that one when he's feeling particularly victimized by a record company," Ross says, pointing to a button reading "I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed, or numbered!"

Jokes aside, the fledgling Morcheeba really didn't know where to turn when the media machine grasped its tender flesh in its talons. "We don't have many friends in the record industry, and we didn't have any when we first got a record contract. That's why we called our first album *Who Can You Trust?*: Everyone had advice for us, but only when it benefited them in a certain way. There was a guy from Nirvana, the original '60s band, who told us things like, 'Join the PRS [the British performance-rights company that collects songwriting royalties].' No one had even told us about that."

And airplay was about to become an issue. "Trigger Hippie" was named Single of the Week by *Melody Maker*, and got added to national playlists soon after. Famously enough, as the English say, that was about the extent of press Morcheeba got at home. Neither the *Maker* nor the *NME* reviewed *Who Can You Trust?*, perhaps because of not-unfounded grumbling that it more than slightly resembled the work of a certain other trip-hop act. "We had to go through that claptrap, about us copying Portishead," says Ross, "and in a sense, we did, to get the attention of the media and the record companies. In the long run, it was about getting our foot in the door, about getting noticed." When asked about the criticism that the band didn't really take a lot of chances musically, Ross is equally forthright. "Yeah, we didn't really. It's not very offensive; I think that's the best thing about it. We didn't want to frighten anyone away, but at the same time, we wanted to let people know what we were doing was genuine, which is a fine line to walk down. You don't want to lay out your best card first, do you?" But critics don't buy records. And to date, nearly half a million

>>> *Continued on page 28*

**BY ANDREW BEAUJON  
PHOTOS: DANNY McLEWIN**



**“ SKYE SANG SO QUIETLY, YOU COULD HARDLY HEAR IT, BUT IT WAS JUST BEAUTIFUL — LIKE ABSOLUTE SWEET MOLASSES OF THE VOICE. ”**



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>>> *Continued from page 27*

people worldwide have taken Ross's side. "What sells records," he says, with admirable succinctness, "is being at a dinner party, and hearing a record, and someone saying, 'Oh, this is really nice. What is it?'"

Presumably, at one such dinner party, David Byrne asked that question. He was so impressed by Morcheeba's production work on *Who Can You Trust?* that he asked the group to collaborate with him on his next solo record. "It was amazing," says Ross. "He sent us a tape, it was like 20 songs, just him in his bedroom. Can you imagine? I've always thought he was a genius, and we had to go through and pick out the songs we liked." Over the next couple of months, whenever Morcheeba had a break from touring, Byrne would come over and record a couple of songs; six ended up on his sixth solo album, *Feelings*. Besides gaining from Byrne's decades-long experience with the record industry—"We could sit down and have a meal and say, 'How did you deal with it? What was it like when you did your first tour?'"—Morcheeba's work on *Feelings* also encouraged the trio to branch out a bit. "We got to experiment 'cause it wasn't our music and our direct responsibility! We just did loads of shit that we wouldn't have done, that we were being very timid with on our first album."

Morcheeba's new album, *Big Calm* (China-Sire), is, to Ross, much less timid. "Now that we've sold loads of records, we can get back to doing what we used to do, country music with hip-hop beats." The album is definitely a step forward. "Our first album was quite adventurous, but in an easy way, this sort of join-the-dots kind of production. Whereas now we're filling in the dots. We're in our creative adolescence; we're kind of showing off a bit." *Calm's* first single, "Shoulder Holster," is an expert pastiche of sitars, electric piano, scratching and skillful drum programming. "Part Of The Process," in particular, comes closest to Morcheeba's idea of playing country music with hip-hop beats. Its palette is much more variegated: Skittering strings and orchestral maneuvers tie things together. And Ross, who writes most of the music, plays beautiful slide and pedal-steel guitar throughout.

These days seem made for a band like Morcheeba. It's been said that in the late '90s, originality is less about innovation than an innovative use of influences. Everything, goes the argument, is there for the taking. As Morcheeba prepares to head out for most of next year—with a live drummer, a keyboard player and Edwards's two children (her latest, fathered by Ross's friend Justin, was born in February) in tow—the world seems very much within its reach.

And Ross himself feels there's no problem with drawing on American music styles far from the experience of the average British person. "I think it's all fantasy based. We grew up in a tiny village, and we were into hip-hop. At the same time, I was completely obsessed by blues music. And I think that now our fantasies about music have brought us into the reality that we've fantasized about. I mean, the first time I turn up in New Orleans and Chicago is actually playing blues guitar in front of a local audience, actually playing their music back to them. Or Paul scratch-DJing in New York, the town that invented hip-hop."

"Very typically English bands, like Pulp or Blur, don't transcend those cultural barriers," he continues. "All Beatles songs, if you can work out English language, you can understand completely what John Lennon was saying. There's no complexity to the way he's talking. It's just letting people know, putting it out in front of them, saying, 'This is the linking thread.' It's like religion: All music comes from basically the same thing. People who see the patterns can put them together in a way that's very easy to understand. Things are the same everywhere you go—it just rains a lot in England!" **■ (E)**

④ "Let Me See" by Morcheeba appears on this month's CD

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CLOSE OBSERVERS OF THE *DREW CAREY SHOW* WILL HAVE NOTICED THE TV funnyman's taste in music emerging among the droll puns and self-effacing humor—the hit sitcom's current theme is an old Ian Hunter chestnut, "Cleveland Rocks," and the star customarily includes hip band T-shirts in his wardrobe. This season, Carey made his pop fandom about as subtle as the make-up favored by his on-screen nemesis, Mimi, by inviting one of his favorite artists in for a killer cameo spot. And deep in the heart of Texas, that rambunctious rockabilly rowdy, the Reverend Horton Heat, received said invitation with much rejoicing.

How did this come about? It seems Carey and one of his producer pals were driving cross-country last year, in a car fueled by only the most high-octane CDs, the good Reverend's, *It's Martini Time* among them. "And the next thing you know, Drew Carey is callin' us up," marvels Heat, who, when not onstage wielding a booming Gretsch, done up in his vintage Western wear, is known as regular guy Jim Heath. "So we did this HBO special he hosted called *Mr. Vegas' All-Night Party*. We played a song, then did a little jam session at the end with Wayne Newton and David Cassidy. It was pretty funny, kind of like the old and new Vegas."

Next stop: Hollywood, for a live taping of a Carey episode, in which Heath, bassist Jimbo and drummer Scott Churilla play Carey's opponents in a grudge-match battle of the bands. Granted, the trio was only the backup group behind a veteran character actor, but the Rev had some snappy speaking parts penned just for him. "I was talking to [Carey Show character] Louis about his ex-girlfriend," Heath chortles. "And it was something like, 'I saw your ex-girlfriend last night... in my bed!' And his reply was 'Well, you've been married to her for 15 years! That was the funniest thing I got to say.'"

Few performers could ask for a better endorsement. But although the Rev. has also appeared on TV's *Homicide* (excellently cast as a televangelist) and in the indie film *Love And A .45*, he's thinking of giving up acting entirely. Reason #1: He got so nervous during the *Drew Carey Show* filming, he flubbed his well-rehearsed lines on the very first take. Reason #2: He has a new fire-and-brimstone sonic sermon on the shelves, *Space Heater* (Interscope), so he wants to get back to doing what he knows best, rocking the rafters across the land.

Today, Heath is dressed down in jeans, a baseball cap, horn-rimmed glasses and a Social Distortion jacket, a far sartorial cry from his flashy "altar" ego. You might say he's been playing a character for 12 years, since a Texas nightclub proprietor first jokingly christened him "Reverend." The Rev has a

>>> [Continued on page 52](#)



REVEREND  
HORTON  
HEAT  
BY  
TOM  
LANHAM  
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BLAND

# ACTOR



# pulp

## the return of the thin white duke

an outsider even among his admirers,  
jarvis cocker is a different class of rock star  
by kurt b. reighley · photos: michael halsband





The volatile nature of pop stardom demands the constant calibration of the balance between seeming larger than life and extremely human. Few musicians appreciate this tightrope routine better than Jarvis Cocker, lead singer of UK quintet Pulp. ¶ Andy Warhol may have allotted everyone 15 minutes of fame, but Jarvis knows that's rarely the case. In a lifetime, most of us enjoy only the briefest of moments when the spotlight is wholly ours.

Many must be content with simply the mere promise of maybe, someday, relishing one such shining moment. Every time Jarvis Cocker steps on stage, he is the understudy in the high school play who brings down the house on a moment's notice, the benchwarmer who scores the winning goal. Unabashedly affected and fashionably unfashionable, Jarvis Cocker is the patron saint of underdogs everywhere.

Tonight, curled up on the sofa in his chilly New York hotel suite, he's dressed in a dark, velvety

suit with wide lapels, a mauve shirt, and tinted sunglasses. He wraps a full-length fur around him like a small child, pulling it up tight under his chin for warmth. He is simultaneously gawky and fabulous. It is this intrinsic connection between these two qualities that distinguishes him from all other pretenders to the throne.

Enhance that image with Cocker's rapier wit, plus his incisive attention to detail in erotic musings such as "Pencil Skirt" and "Acrylic Afternoons," and there can be little surprise that he is, unlikely as it may seem, something of a sex symbol. Prior to my audience with Jarvis, several of my female friends feverishly fan themselves when I confess who my date is.

The singer smiles weakly when I attempt to cheer him with this tidbit. This evening, Jarvis Cocker is erring on the human side of the equation we mapped out a moment ago. England's most unlikely pop icon has a horrible tummy ache. The pungent odor of artificial orange flavor fills the air as he pours another glass of Gatorade. "If only your friends could see me now, bedridden with intestinal complaints," he sighs.

They'd probably love him even more.

**But there was a time, not so long ago, when very few** people adored Jarvis Cocker. For more than ten years Pulp—comprised of Cocker, bassist Steve Mackey, keyboard player Candida Doyle, drummer Nick Banks and guitarist/violinist Russell Senior—peddled its drawing room dramas, dressed up in a disjointed mix of cabaret, disco and pop, to an indifferent public.

And with good reason. Listen to older important titles like 1992's *Separations* (later reissued domestically via *Razor & Tie*) or 1986's *Freaks*, and you're confronted with a band long on ideas and ambition, but short on solid songs (with the odd exception, such as "My Legendary Girlfriend").

About ten years down the line from the band's debut *It*, things finally began to gel. Noteworthy singles like "Babies" and "Razzmatazz" gave way to the transcendent "Do You Remember The First Time?," a bittersweet reminiscence of losing one's virginity. All those tracks wound up on 1994's *His 'n' Hers*, the first Pulp album to appear Stateside.

A year later, Pulp, now augmented by second

guitarist Mark Webber, returned with *Different Class* (it wouldn't come out here till '96), the closest thing conceivable to a perfect album. Art may imitate life, but Cocker's lyrics erased the dividing lines. The singles alone teemed with more riches than the average full-length. "Sorted For E's & Wizz" captured the ephemeral euphoria and inevitable comedown of post-Summer of Love rave culture. "Mis-Shapes" trumpeted a battle hymn for downtrodden outsiders to overthrow our beautiful oppressors. "Disco 2000" roughly prodded a generation's diminishing dreams for the future with an incessant disco beat.

The clincher was "Common People," the soundtrack for the summer of 1995 in England. When the band performed it at the Glastonbury music festival, an entire field pumped their fists and sang along: "You'll never watch your life slide out of view/And then dance and drink and screw/Because there's nothing else to do." Pulp had finally arrived.

**One of the countless ironies surrounding this triumph** was that the common people Cocker celebrated had made his life hell for so many years. Growing up in the northern city of Sheffield, where the band began its convoluted crawl, Jarvis frequently felt the brunt of being odd.

"Even though Sheffield is a big city, it's got a real small town mentality to it," he explains. "If you're a bit different—it doesn't matter in what particular way—that manifests itself, and you become a target for other people. You just had to learn routes around the city center that didn't take you past certain bars."

"It's funny," he muses, shifting uneasily. "You forget about all that." These days, the sorts who once took offense at the singer recognize him from *Top Of The Pops*. Jarvis reckons they'd still probably like to kick his skinny ass, but instead they just hoist their pints and nod "awright, mate." "I guess that's why you get such a lot of renegade types being involved in entertainment," he observes. "It's one way of escaping getting smacked."

Not that the good people of Sheffield were wholly without provocation. Jarvis keeps very few photographs from that period of his life, but the ones he does have paint a vulgar picture. "When I



L-R: DOYLE, MACKAY, COCKER, BANKS, WEBBER



at some of the things that I wore, around the age of 16 and 17, it makes me wince." Still, he probably wouldn't have resorted to violence just to register his displeasure. "Everybody makes a few fashion mistakes. It's part of growing up. You've got to allow people to do that. It's not a threat."

**In the wake of *Different Class*, Pulp's new prominence,** and particularly Jarvis's ascension to sanctified media darling status, threw some curve balls the band's way.

Perhaps the most notorious one came on February 19, 1996, at the Brit Awards. Cocker decided to show Michael Jackson what most music fans already knew: that the King of Pop's crown was severely tarnished. Cocker interrupted Jackson's attempt to be cooler than Jesus mid-performance, by climbing on stage and brandishing his backside to the audience. "My actions were a form of protest at the way Michael Jackson sees himself as some Christ-like figure," he explained at the time. Yet even as the boys in blue rounded up Jarvis for interrogation and Jackson whimpered foul play, a legion of fans—both famous and not so—rushed to support Cocker.

Almost two years later, Jarvis agrees that the outpouring of sympathy probably stemmed from people appreciating his action as a gesture that showed one is never completely out of control of one's surroundings. Though it may be paved with gold, he has consistently sidestepped the path of least resistance. With his startling protest, the singer demonstrated that even in the darkest hour, you can fight back on some level, however small... or widely televised. "That's the one positive thing I can think about that whole incident," he admits. "Its general impact on my life wasn't so great."

"But that's the horrible thing that seems to happen to anybody when they get some measure of success," he continues. "It's like the lights go out. You either repeat the same formula in the music and just bland out, or you surround yourself with people who always tell you that you're great, and lose yourself that way." Neither scenario holds any appeal to our Jarvis. "I'd rather just die then, because nothing's going to change, nothing's going to get any better. So why not just pop yourself while you actually are a bit good?"

Apparently, guitarist Russell Senior felt much the same way. Towards the end of the year, he announced he was quitting the band. Later, he would be quoted in the papers as saying that it had ceased to be "cool" to hold membership in Pulp. The group elected to continue as a quintet. But considering that the line-up had seen only one change (introducing Wehber) since 1988, Russell's departure had a profound impact on the making of Pulp's new album, entitled *This Is Hardcore* (Island).

"It's like Janet Jackson said," jokes Jarvis, singing "You don't know what you got till it's gone" under his breath.

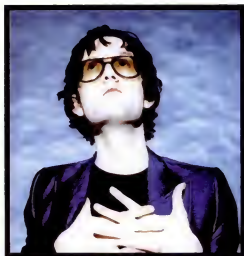
"Russell was quite good in the way that he would never shy away from being awkward, or taking the opposite tack from everybody else. And

he's some good character traits: his collection of sunglasses, and a wide knowledge of funguses of the world, all that." Russell had been in Pulp longer than anyone except Jarvis, and adjusting to his absence took time. "I suppose that's why it's taken longer to do this record." But that delay was for the best. "If people get remarried within two months of getting divorced, it's not a good idea. We had to wait till we were in the right frame of mind, so we didn't feel like a group with a bit missing."

Fortunately, relations between Senior and his former band have remained cordial, much to Jarvis's relief. "It always makes me a bit sad when people have obviously been really good friends, and now they won't even talk to each other."

Cocker has said he always wanted there to be discernible stylistic change between every Pulp album. Senior's departure ensured that would be inevitable this time around. Admittedly, except for the violin parts, it might be difficult to pinpoint what Senior specifically contributed to prior Pulp platters. "But the dynamic within the group had changed." Eventually, the group found its equilibrium as a five-piece.

Ultimately, any changes in the Pulp sound as captured on *This Is Hardcore* were fairly organic.



"I hate when you can tell a group decided to be different." Jarvis wrinkles his nose at the notion of deliberately imposing a musical agenda—"this is going to be our 'serious' album"—on a project. "It's always shit, because you can hear the effort." And that's a terrific turn off. "In any social situation, when somebody's making a big effort, people run a mile away. It's like the smell of fear."

Ah yes... fear. It's an emotion that's preyed on Cocker's psyche quite a bit these many months. Could Pulp still sustain its celebrity without compromising? Or would Jarvis go completely off the rails? Hence the bracing opening to *This Is Hardcore*, appropriately entitled "The Fear," a wide-screen nervous breakdown as scored by Alfred Hitchcock composer Bernard Herrmann and Marc Bolan. "This is the sound of someone losing the plot/making out that they're OK when they're not..." croons Cocker, teetering on the brink.

The over-the-top tune, inspired in part by old Hammer House Of Horror themes, took shape when Cocker was visiting America last year. In

order to build on the vibe of the music, Jarvis knew the lyric had to be genuinely terrifying. Metaphors about vampires feasting on his corpse simply wouldn't do the trick.

"So I thought about things that people are afraid of, panic attacks and such, which seem to be becoming more prevalent. The terrible thing about panic attacks, what brings it to a real screaming head, is that if you see yourself going off into one, you don't want anybody to know, but trying to cover it up makes it worse." He shakes his head. "Luckily I haven't had one for about just over a year or so, now."

"But we won't get too personal..." he reverts.

Although he balks at using the word "comic" to describe the song, he does find "The Fear" to be a successful slice of black comedy. "If you accept that things are so bad, and dig down till they get worse and worse, sometimes you can come out the other side. Things turn out to be quite funny, because they're so bad."

It's a gripping opening, and sets the standard, if not the tone, for the rest of the album. "Hopefully, things get better after that." Well, nobody will mistake this for a Doris Day tribute. "Oh yes, but I don't believe there's anything to be gained by painting a picture completely black," insists Jarvis. "You've got to have a bit of shading. But I suppose it's a bit darker than the previous album."

"**'Help The Aged,'** the first single from *This Is Hardcore*, preceded the album late last year. Jarvis turned 34 in 1997, and has been wrestling with his own mortality a bit.

"I'm going to have real trouble if I get Alzheimer's Disease in later life, because I've always subscribed to the idea that you should keep the past as a memory, rather than with photographs and stuff like that. But as my memory's started getting worse, I've realized that doesn't really hold up in the long run. Sometimes it's good to have a photo otherwise you'd never know an event happened. There's a whole ten-year chunk of my life I haven't got any real evidence of."

Fear of his brain dissolving into so much porridge is one of the things that keeps Jarvis's mind so sharp. "It's like a muscle. If you don't use your brain, even if you've got a fairly decent intellect in the first place, it'll just decay." Physical pain doesn't fill him with a fraction of the dread losing his powers of cognition does. "If you don't know what's real and what isn't, you can't discern between what's going on in your head and what's happening in the real world..." he trails off, looking down.

Jarvis is determined to stay rooted in "the real world" because that's where his audience is. Although there are a few consistent rules to Pulp's creative process—the music is always written first, as a group effort, before he writes lyrics; usually, he retires to the bedroom with a drink or two when it's time for that task—Cocker doesn't pursue his muse from the confines of an ivory tower. *Au contraire*,

he's found riding his bicycle through the London streets a useful aid to stoking creativity. "There's one song on the record called "Dishes," and I got the first line for that ["I am not Jesus/Though I have the same initials"] while I was on my bike, riding to our rehearsal room," he recalls.

"There's always a temptation when you get a bit of success to think 'Oh, this is my career now, I'd better start taking it seriously...' No! That's not what you do. The thing that got you there was not concentrating too hard and being self-conscious."

## Apart from the obvious reasons why I was watching pornography, I got interested in how quickly a person would get used up in that business. There are only so many orifices that can be penetrated.

That should remain a constant, no matter how much brouhaha unfolds around you. "If you have all these discussions that everybody is a part of about the snare sound, you're missing the point. Music has to be listened to by people in the real world."

Which leads us to the album's title track. "I've always said I would never write about the actual process of being in a band. I hate that rock 'n' roll whining." And yet, if he was going to be true to himself, he had to address the way fame was changing him. So he sat down and explored the parallels between his own rough ride to the top, and the ups-and-downs of the pornography which he'd become thoroughly acquainted with while watching adult pay TV channels during "lonely nights on tour."

"Apart from the obvious reasons why I was watching it, I got interested in how quickly a person would get used up in that business. There are only so many orifices that can be penetrated." Stars can see it all, and do it all, very quickly in West Hollywood, so variety has to be maintained by introducing a constant stream of new flesh. "I became fascinated with what became of the old."

"Sometimes you would see that in some films," he continues. "You would see a person at the start of their career, being quite into it and fresh. And then maybe just eight months or a year later, their face would be a bit puffy, and then their eyes would be pretty glazed." Already they were beginning to fade; their appeal was diminishing. "And what's going to happen after that, when you look too fucked up to even be in [videos] any more? I found that quite a frightening thing. And in my frame of mind at the time, I equated that a bit with how the same thing happens in the music business."

"Becoming famous has been quite a life-altering experience for me." But with "This Is Hardcore," he managed to write about it without being explicit.

Yet "hardcore" has other meanings, too. "When everything else is burned away, there will still be something left. And that's the hardcore." This became a central theme that emerged as the

album neared completion. "You sustain yourself on illusions throughout your life such a lot—I'm not saying that's a bad thing, because everybody needs that—you need something to aspire to." But be careful what you wish for, and be prepared for the repercussions if you get it.

Jarvis Cocker weathered years of not being successful by living on planet Pulp. After school, he postponed going to university and signed on the dole. Being in a band gave him an excuse for existing, and behaving the way he did. Yet when he

finally achieved fame, all the support systems he'd created to bolster his personality were torn out from under him.

"It's like people suddenly announce 'Oh, it's all right, you don't need that anymore because you're a successful person. You're valid, accepted into our mainstream society. You no longer have to trudge your way along the margins of life.'" But after 12 years on the sidelines, Pulp was fairly well acclimated to that existence. "Suddenly you realize that a certain amount of your personality has been fairly bogus and constructed, in a way. So that might leave a vacuum." Thus the artist must find a way to deal with this new state. "Which I hope I have, without having to resort to analysis."

Fame may not always be the prettiest mantle to throw over one's weary shoulders, but if anyone in pop knows how to transform a sow's ear into haute couture, Jarvis Cocker is the man. "It's one of those ironic things," he observes, pulling his fur around him a little tighter. "You clamor after something for years and years, and then it happens. So it doesn't wash to turn around and say 'Stop! Take it away! I don't want it!'"

Jarvis is trying to master being a star without turning into Greta Garbo. That said, he's had a rougher time making the transition than, say, Madonna. "There were times when it was very unpleasant for me. Because I reveal quite a lot of myself in what I do anyway." As Jarvis Cocker becomes public property, the boundaries separating art and life blur even further. "So I have to decide if I'm going too far in revealing stuff about myself for public consumption."

And then you get newspapers writing you up, because you make good copy. "They're not doing it for any point or higher motives, they're just doing it for titillation." Which naturally made Jarvis shy away. Only you can't do that when you're a media figure. "If you let the papers know that they're hurting you by writing about you, they'll just go in for the kill. It's like when there's a bit of bite in the water, the shark will just come and bite your leg off."

The singer shrugs. "I asked to be put in the position that I'm in. But it's a bit embarrassing for my friends. I feel like I'm a bad person to have on a night out. You just want to have a quiet drink, and suddenly there's flashbubs going off."

Much as he might like to bury his head in the sand sometimes, Jarvis knows there's no escaping from the limelight as long as it wants him. Even when he's just visiting with him family, as he learned a few Christmases back, right after Pulp had become massively popular at home.

"Obviously my mother had this mixture of deep pride and immense relief, seeing as how she thought I'd been wasting my life for such a long time. And when it came to the Christmas party that year, she insisted on putting our CD on." With *Different Class* spinning on the "shuffle" setting with four other discs, Jarvis felt like he was playing an involuntary game of Russian Roulette. "You never knew when you were safe. Also, my stepfather is quite technical, and he'd rigged up speakers all around the house. I was a nervous wreck. There'd be a few Christmas carols, then the Eurythmics or something, and then one of our songs would come on... and I'd have to go out of the room."

As Jarvis's stamina begins to fade, I suggest we wrap up our chat. While getting ready to leave, I admit to him that originally I'd wanted to base our interview around a gimmick. It's an old journalist trick to get the artist out of the usual hotel or conference room and engaged in something more inspirational or illuminating; I was going to make him go shopping for a new pair of leather trousers.

Yet when I thought about the professional standards of the specialist store I had planned to take him to, where the sales staff will point you towards the racks of rubber intimate apparel as calmly as a librarian directing you towards the reference books, I decided it wasn't titillating enough. But now, that amusing story opportunity wasted, it seems even clearer that the magic of Pulp is their ability to find the extraordinary within the ordinary, no matter what the circumstances.

Jarvis's tired eyes light up again. He sees a very clear parallel between what you might expect and what actually you get from a top-notch erotic boutique, and what you think fame will be like versus the disappointing reality of the beast. "You thought you were going to walk through the door and be whipped into submission, strobe lights going off and all that," he grins. "You've got an illusion of what it's going to be like. What you're getting from that store is going to give you pleasure, but the actual process [of obtaining leather pants] is different from how you thought it was going to be."

"Not that this is a fucking concept album, but when you get to a certain stage, you do see through the illusions and dreams," he compares in conclusion. "You can still have them, but with a bit more grounding in reality underneath them. You don't actually believe in it one hundred percent."

► "Parry Hard" by Pulp appears on this month's CD



**EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT**

## 5uu's

### *Crisis In Clay* **Cuneiform**

LIKE "MODERNISM," "PROGRESSIVE ROCK" is a term that has stubbornly and poignantly outlived its usefulness. The words connote innovation and change, but they refer to what most people think of as a dated genre. Yet lately, it's becoming clear just how many of today's exponents of progress in rock—from Run On to Ruins to the most interesting new metal bands—have been influenced by prog. This may explain why the 5uu's, dyed-in-the-wool prog rockers whose frontman, Bob Drake, sings like a clone of Yes's Jon Anderson, sound innovative and inspired. *Crisis In Clay*, their fourth album, is a rhythmically complex, sometimes cacophonous record that is keyboard-based, yet rocks as hard as if they had all played guitars. Much of the fuel comes from composer David Kerman's drumming—precisely planted barrages that kick off the opener "Comeuppance" and set up a permanent tension between sharp, edgy percussion and glossy waves of synth and voice. The tension peaks on "The Willful Suspension Of Disbelief," in which Kerman's drilling rhythms back a soaring, classically prog vocal. The lyrics, amusingly enough, are a discourse on mythical figures—warriors, dwarfs, all those characters that populate the stereotypical prog rock album. The song ends with Drake declaring himself a believer—if not in Gentle Giants, then at least in myth and literature as the animus for challenging rock.

>>> Andrea Moed

## hasil adkins

### *What The Hell Was I Thinking* **Fat Possum**

EVER BEEN TO BOONE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA? Me neither, but man, is my interest piqued. It would be a third world country by any other name, but Boone County's true riches lie in the time-honored tradition of Southern eccentricity. Two of America's greatest living freaks—Jesco White and Hasil Adkins—call Boone County home (in fact, they're reportedly neighbors). The former is a certified schizophrenic Elvis impersonator and the subject of the classic, widely bootlegged documentary *Dancing Outlaw*. The latter is a 62-year-old, chain-smoking rockabilly outlaw—a man whose genius does not abide by that or any other genre. Adkins, a.k.a. The Hunch, has been recording since the '50s, compiling one of the strangest catalogues ever to pass for "popular" music. *What The Hell Was I Thinking* is his first new set in over a decade, and it proves that you can grow up, but you can never grow sane. Time has tempered Adkins's attack, but all of his signature touches are still present: out of tune (and outta sight) guitars, spastic percussion of no particular meter, and howling, Novocain-drenched vocals about ugly women and trips to Mars. This is beautiful, primal, freaky stuff. God bless ya, Hunch!

>>> Matt Hanks



**5uu's**  
**CRISIS IN CLAY**  
**CUNEIFORM**  
 RELEASED JAN. 30  
 FILE UNDER  
 GENUINELY PROGRESSIVE  
 ROCK.  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 SOFT MACHINE, YES, HENRY  
 COW, KING CRIMSON.

## oren bloedow

### *The Luckiest Boy In The World*

#### **Knitting Factory Works**

OREN BLOEDOW HAS PLAYED WITH NEW YORK City groups the Lounge Lizards and Elysian Fields, so you might expect his new album to be like his other ones—quirky, jazzy stuff. And you might think that with Medeski Martin And Wood as his backing band, his first solo album would be a skronky, downtown jazzfunk fest. Surprisingly, that's not the case. With *The Luckiest Boy In The World*, Bloedow has made a pop songwriter's record, infused with the mournful spirits of Mark Eitzel, Alex Chilton/Chris Bell, Badfinger and even a shade or two of Nick Drake. Although he may be thought of primarily as a jazz or "downtown" instrumentalist, Bloedow has one of those pure voices, informed by both the weary sad-boy sound of Chilton or Pete Ham, and the soaring, wounded falsetto of Brian Wilson or Eric Carmen. Medeski Martin And Wood do more than the expected funk and flexing, delivering a compelling musical backdrop that makes tunes like "Endless Tears" and "The Living Room" seem like classics from the late '60s or early '70s. Judging from how infrequently good music of this ilk is recorded, it seems that it's hard to do; and Bloedow does it well.

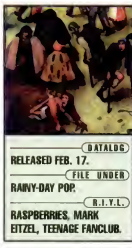
>>> James Lien

## bran van 3000

### **Glee** **Capitol**

THE STUNNING, MOTLEY SOUND OF BRAN VAN 3000 is the brainchild of Jamie "Bran Man" Di Salvio, a Beck-like wonder, who's responsible for galvanizing the Montreal group's 20-odd singers, DJs, rappers, musicians and knob twirlers. Befitting this posse's organic line-up, the group's US debut displays a dizzying array of musicsapes stretching from opera and folk to French pop. Over the slow-burning slacker groove of "Couch Surfer," a male voice-over states the collective's dictum: "by sampling... you can take a trip around the world without leaving your easy chair." Prepare to sit back and lose yourself in *Glee*. The party-hearty "Old School" pumps metal chants, disco and Superfly funk over that familiar "hotel-motel" riff from "Rapper's Delight." "Supermodel" and "Willard" are charming country ballads spiked with a clever mix of drum 'n' bass, rap and spoken word. And on the *Maxinquaye*-style "Carry On" BV3 even cops from its own killer first single, "Drinking In L.A." The tough urban edge, anchored here by Di Salvio's raw, imperfect vocals and the dynamic raps of lyrical assassin Steve "Liquid" Hawley, is tempered by the sexy harmonies of various soul divas. A full-on eclectic attack oozing with grooves and witty indie-pop insouciance, *Glee* squares up as the *Odyssey* of summer '98.

>>> Sarah Pratt



**OREN BLOEDOW**  
**THE LUCKIEST BOY IN THE WORLD**  
**KNITTING FACTORY WORKS**  
 RELEASED FEB. 17.  
 FILE UNDER  
 RAINY-DAY POP.  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 RASPBERRIES, MARK  
 EITZEL, TEENAGE FANCLUB.



**Hasil Adkins**  
**WHAT THE HELL WAS I THINKING**  
**FAT POSSUM**  
 RELEASED FEB. 24.  
 FILE UNDER  
 ROCKABILLY FROM MARS.  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 OBLIVIONS, ROWNE  
 DAWSON, HANK WILLIAMS.



**BRAN VAN 3000**  
**GLEE**  
**CAPITOL**  
 RELEASED MAR. 10. WEB-  
 SITE AT WWW.VISION  
 INTERNET.NET/CLIENTS/NET  
 00394/INDEX.HTML.  
 FILE UNDER  
 FUNKY, ALL-INCLUSIVE  
 HIP-HOP.  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 BECK, CHEMICAL  
 BROTHERS, BEASTIE BOYS.



## cornelius

**Fantasma** Matador

BRIMMING. CRAMMED. SWOLLEN. SATURATED. Choose your own adjective, but quickly, 'cause another blast of static isn't far behind. Cornelius is the nom-de-rock of Keigo Oyamada, who produces records for the likes of Pizzicato Five and Kahimie Karie, releases records on his own Trattoria label (whose diverse catalog goes from the soundtrack to *Planet Of The Apes* to hip-pop like Seagull Screaming to noise band Violent Onsen Geisha), and occasionally makes records of his own. *Fantasma*, his first domestic release, is more straightforward than his previous recordings, but it still severely tests the limits of a listener's bandwidth. Opening with the sounds of Oyamada setting up the studio for the day ("Mic Check"), *Fantasma* immediately segues into hip-hop/cocktail sounds ("The Micros Disney World Tour"), then to oblique, rock-blocking beats, ("New Music Machine"). By the time Robert Schneider and Hilarie Sidney of the Apples In Stereo (who also record for Trattoria) start singing on "Chapter 8—Seashore And Horizon," you're kind of numb to incongruity. It's no wonder that Cornelius is the king of Tokyo's Shibuya district, where fashion moves faster than it can possibly be recorded. Here are a few minutes caught, sneaking, on tape: impressive, frustrating, and apparently the pop of the future.

&gt;&gt;&gt; Andrew Beaujon



**CATALOGUE**  
RELEASED MAR. 24.  
**FILE UNDER**  
CUT, PASTE, REPLY ALL.  
**R.I.Y.L.**

BECK, BOREDOMS,  
PIZZICATO FIVE.

## pete droge

**Spacey And Shakin** 57-Epic

PETE DROGE FIRST GAINED NOTORIETY WITH ONE of the worst radio hits in recent memory, the artless, juvenile "If You Don't Love Me (I'll Kill Myself)." His third record, thankfully, is worlds away from that nadir of coffeehouse slop. Producer Brendan O'Brien (Pearl Jam, Matthew Sweet) strikes a neat balance between meticulously crafting arrangements and giving Droge's band, especially guitarist Pete Stroud, room to move. The songs themselves fall into two categories. First, there are those too slight for the rock attack to save, such as the title track's ersatz Anglo-psych, or the overcooked "I Want To Go Away," sung from the point of view of a mental patient. In the second category are songs too strong for the occasional bombast to ruin. When Droge sticks to rootsy, but non-formulaic, hooks, he's on safer ground. "Motorkid," a highlight, sports a T. Rex-ish thump and some sharp lines ("Bellhop's a cyclops/I tell him 'bout truckstops"). Several songs, including the lovely, banjo-tinged "Blindly," celebrate not knowing where one's headed—"Seems the more I'm lost the more I'm feelin' free." It's odd that this well-worded, though admirable, sentiment should be delivered on such a cautiously constructed, slightly anonymous record.

&gt;&gt;&gt; Franklin Bruno



**CATALOGUE**  
RELEASE DATE: APR. 10.  
**FILE UNDER**  
ADULT ALTERNATIVE.  
**R.I.Y.L.**

JOHN HATT, PETER CASE,  
MATTHEW SWEET.

## damon &amp; naomi

**Playback Singers** Sub Pop

WHEN MASAKI BATHO (OF THE BAND GHOST) visited the home of Damon Krukowski and Naomi Yang, he marveled at the acoustics of their living room and said it would be a great space to lay down tracks. The duo shrugged off the suggestion at first, but soon reconsidered. It's a good thing they did, as *Playback Singers*, Damon & Naomi's third album, is their lushest to date. The acoustic guitar, harmonium, drums and dewy vocals are all laced with a serene reverberation that makes it sound like the band is lulling the day away on top of the Rocky Mountains. Before visions of John Denver start dancing in your head, keep in mind that these songs still recall the days when Damon & Naomi were Galaxie 500's rhythm section. Damon strums at a Codeine pace and Naomi's doleful crown dips and glides like a dandelion seed lost in a gentle summer breeze. Distinctive embellishments, like backwards guitar and metallic percussion, help make *Playback Singers* more than just another album to help you fall asleep. It'll transport you to la-la land even when your eyes are wide open.

&gt;&gt;&gt; Neil Gladstone



**CATALOGUE**  
RELEASE DATE: APR. 7.  
**FILE UNDER**  
WISTFUL INDIE-ROCK.  
**R.I.Y.L.**

EDITH FROST, FLYING  
SAUCER ATTACK, BELLE  
AND SEBASTIAN.

## alejandro escovedo

**More Miles Than Money: Live 1994-1996****Bloodshot**

POINT IN FACT: WHILE ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO IS a significant talent with 20 years of music-making behind him, the Austin, Texas-based singer-songwriter/punk-rockers has yet to find the semblance of commercial success. Too bad. His first two solo albums, *Gravity* and *Thirteen Years*, were first-class efforts filled with rocking, hard luck anthems and incredibly poignant balladry. Since the release of his '96 album for Rykodisc, Escovedo has toured incessantly and his live shows have come to reach near-mythic proportions. Whether playing with a stripped-down bar band or his full-blown ensemble, replete with violin and cello, Escovedo comes on like a down-and-out prize fighter looking for redemption that only a knockout blow will provide. This disc is a perfect scrapbook souvenir of Alejandro Escovedo's live shows. The tempo is primarily moderate, but the authenticity of his dark voice and the seasoned accompaniment of his road band keep the music pumped with dynamic tension. While we are treated to a brooding cover of the Rolling Stones' "Sway" and his celebrated rendition of Iggy & The Stooges' "I Wanna Be Your Dog," the real gold is found in Escovedo's heart-rending original material. Evocative elegies like "She Doesn't Live Here Anymore" and "Broken Bottle" are sad, powerful statements from the songbook of a mature and enduring road warrior.

&gt;&gt;&gt; Mitch Myers



**CATALOGUE**  
RELEASED FEB. 24.  
**FILE UNDER**  
PUNK-SCHOOLED SINGER-  
SONGWRITER.  
**R.I.Y.L.**

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, JOE  
ELY, TOWNIE VAN ZANDT,  
LOU REED.



## esthero

**Breath From Another** **WORK**

ON FIRST LISTEN, *BREATH FROM ANOTHER*, THE debut from electronic/dance/rock project Esthero, feels like pure déjà-vu. A Rube Goldberg contraction of modern rock, lounge pop and trip-hop, the album practically defines trendy. But trendy doesn't have to mean tripe; listen some more, and you may feel you've gotten a small peek into the future of crossover electronic music. What's it sound like? Slick, for starters; clamorous but never abrasive; yearning but not very dark; informed by techno but not altogether indebted to it; propelled by computers but somehow organic. Singer Jen-Bea Englishman must have a fairly busy club-going schedule for an 18-year-old. Wherever she picked it up, her voice is a trip-hopper's dream, an eerily perfect cross of Björk with Porshehead's Beth Gibbons. Purring and cooing with a multi-track chorus of her own voice, Englishman is the tinted windshield through which Esthero reveals its plush leather interior. The engine is producer DOC (Martin McKinney, not Dr. Dre's old Long Beach crony), who kneads and smashes together club sounds—a sample here, a Latin beat there—into a canny amalgam that isn't danceable but is surprisingly tuneful. What Esthero's music lacks in adventurousness it wins back in playability, and in its perfected-by-science way, it's comforting. You can imagine Esthero settling into homes and bachelor pads that the Sneaker Pimps only toured.

>>> Chris Molanphy



**DATALOB**

RELEASED MAR. 31.

**FILE UNDER**

CLIFF'S NOTES ON ELECTRONICA.

**R.I.V.L.**

OLIVE, SNEAKER PIMPS, HOOVERPHONIC, BJÖRK.

## far

**Water & Solutions** **Immortal-Epic**

*WATER & SOLUTIONS* IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF an album where a single moment, an otherwise negligible detail, speaks for the entire recording. That moment occurs during the album's first song, "Bury White," and it is the sound of vocalist Jonah Matranga gasping for enough breath to hold his next throat-shredding line. More than the wrecking-ball rhythms or the furious guitar chugging, that split-second is indicative of the Sacramento, California, quartet's intensity. Even though *Water & Solutions* finds the group shedding some of the metal tendencies heard on its debut in favor of a more moody, emo-core style, Far is, first and foremost, a loud rock band and its songs are designed to knock you flat on your ass. There's a formula at work, although Far's songs don't sound formulaic: The shift from a relatively peaceful moment to a hail of chords and beats is no less effective because of its predictability and all of these songs are immanently catchy—and moshable. Meanwhile, Far bucks convention with songs like "Water & Solutions," which subverts its catchiness potential through its use of syncopation. "In 2 Again" features a heavenly string arrangement that is the perfect complement to the plodding bass part, and "Bury White" ends with an eerie, unexpected synth sequence. For Far, divinity is in the details.

>>> Jenny Eliscu



**DATALOB**

RELEASED MAR. 10. WEBSITE AT WWW.FAR.NET/~DARGES/FAR.HTM.

**FILE UNDER**

EMO-CORE.

**R.I.V.L.**

JAWBOX, QUICKSAND, SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE.

## firewater

**The Ponzi Scheme** **Jetset**

THE PONZI SCHEME, THE SECOND ALBUM FROM New York City's Firewater, is not a record you'd want to meet in a dark alley. Flanked by leering violin lines, vulgar saxophones, and honky-tonk piano and organ riffs, singer Tod Ashley (ex-Cop Shoot Cop) bellows lyrics like "I'm goin' down like a pederast in a boys school... sinkin' like a calliope in a whirlpool" as if his conditioning diet for this dance marathon of the damned consisted solely of red meat, cheap whiskey and unfiltered cigarettes. Yet all this swaggering, sin-sational style would vanish in a cloud of blue smoke were *The Ponzi Scheme* not anchored to this bitter earth by the songs. The slinky "Another Perfect Catastrophe" fills every nook and cranny of the crawl space between "tarantula" and "tarantella," while "So Long, Superman" successfully recontextualizes one of the all-time classic bass lines (from "Tainted Love"). Burning brightly but briefly, 80-proof shots like "Green Light," "Whistling In The Dark" and "I Still Love You Judas" will knock your ass on the floor, but you'll be crawling back over broken glass to hit the "repeat" button. Fasten your seat belts, it's gonna be a bumpy night.

>>> Kurt B. Reighley

## Firewater



**DATALOB**

RELEASED MAR. 31. WEBSITE AT SITE027144.PRIMEHOST.COM/FIREWATER.

**FILE UNDER**

CABARET CON CAJONES.

**R.I.V.L.**

MORPHINE, DEUS, CONGO NORVELL.

## front 242

**Mut@ge.Mix@ge** **PIAS-Never**

NEW SCHOOL MEETS OLD SCHOOL AND THE groove wins out on this remix album. Old school is represented by Front 242, the Belgian outfit that helped define techno-industrial dance music in the '80s. As remixed here by new school electronic heroes such as the Orb, Underworld, Prodigy and Rico Nining, the original hard edges are mutated into trance/ambient dub for the next generation. The fun comes from hearing old favorites like "Rhythm Of Time" put through strange transformations in two mixes by the Orb. In the "Messengers Of Neptune" mix, the classic original hook barely seeps through into the consciousness of the listener. The "Victor The Cleaner" mix is a little more recognizable, with sounds and beats from then and now in a hypnotic marriage. Underworld turns in two similarly low-key versions of "Happiness." Only Prodigy manages to burn the barn with two rousing versions of "Religion." As amusing as it all is, is 1998 really a kinder, gentler time than 1988? Longtime Front 242 fans will miss the fire and energy of the olden days, but electronic music aficionados should find this album a tasty brew.

>>> Heidi MacDonald



**DATALOB**

RELEASED JAN. 27. WEBSITE AT WWW.FRONT242.COM/MAIN/INDEX(E).HTML.

**FILE UNDER**

AMBIENT TECHNO DUB.

**R.I.V.L.**

UNDERWORLD, THE ORB, PRODIGY.

## lisa gerrard/pieter bourke

**Duality** 4AD-Warner Bros.

LISA GERRARD HAS ALWAYS SEEMED THE MORE ethereal and mysterious half of Dead Can Dance, what with the unearthly, fragile beauty of her melismatic vocals (not to mention her elliptical interview answers and Bride-of-Frankenstein wardrobe). She seems to have gone along happily with Dead Can Dance's increasing moves towards ethno-ambient in recent years, but it also seems natural that she should want to retain her own outlet for her more celestial, less earthy tendencies. *Duality* is her second solo album, and it sees her continuing where 1995's *The Mirror Pool* left off, drawing on some Arabesque and Celtic influences but mostly working within the realm of liturgical chants. Most of the songs have a gothic or baroque flavor, using either a sparse orchestral arrangement or simple percussion and drones—but the focus is, as it should be, on Gerrard's remarkable voice, which occupies a multi-octave range and can swoop and glide like a graceful bird. Her collaborator for this album is fellow Australian Pieter Bourke (formerly of Eden, one of DCD's leading imitators). Together they've written some accessible material ("Human Game" actually comes close to having a hummable verse-chorus structure), but even with those moments, *Duality* is totally unlike anything else on the "rock" shelf. It's gorgeous, timeless music, with a goosebump-raising sense of majesty.

>>> David Jarman



**CATALOG**  
 RELEASE DATE: APR. 14.  
**FILE UNDER**  
 SACRED MUSIC FOR  
 SECULAR PEOPLE.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 DEAD CAN DANCE, EDEN,  
 BEL CANTO.

## getaway people

**The Getaway People** Columbia

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LISTEN TO "SHE GAVE ME Love," the opening track of *The Getaway People*, and not hear the influence of Beck in the song's chipper mixture of hip-hop beats and blues riffs. The megaphone effect on Boots's rap-sung vocals quickly recalls Mr. Hansen's "Two Turntables And A Microphone." But you can't always judge an album by its opening track. As the funky riffs roll by, it's quickly apparent that these five Norwegians are more than mere copycats. Their love for '70s R&B fits through flute-like Fender Rhodes riffs and sunny refrains. *The Getaway People* is filled with blue-eyed bubble gum soul songs that are as playful and infectious as anything you'll hear on *Schoolhouse Rock*. You'll be waving your hands in the air even though at times you might be thinking "been there." The band only falters when it tries to do jazz-rop—Boots's flow isn't quite edgy enough to pull it off. But those moments are rare. Throw it in the 4 x 4 tape deck and just roll with it.

>>> Neil Gladstone



**CATALOG**  
 RELEASE DATE: APR. 7.  
**FILE UNDER**  
 HIP-HOP FUNK-POP.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE,  
 LITTLE AXE, JAMIROQUAI.

## god lives underwater

**Life In The So-Called Space Age** 1500-A&M

LIFE IN THE SO-CALLED SPACE AGE IS A tolerable album filled with plenty of nothing you haven't heard before. The mildly percolating, "all-electronic" material seems mostly ripped off from NIN's *The Downward Spiral*. God Lives Underwater may aspire to create something hectic and dangerous, but the band instead piles on a bland platiful of influences, like so many over-salted appetizers at a business seminar. The perfunctory, "Hello, my name is..." nature of each effect, whether an occasional buried breakbeat, scratching and drum sampling à la the Beastie Boys or uselessly backward-looped vocals, makes the resulting mix merely a show of competent assemblage. In concentrating on getting all the effects right, the band skimmed on the lyrics and the sorely needed bile. Neither the reshaped melodies—you can smell the leftovers of Metallica's "Fade To Black" ("Happy?") and Nirvana's "All Apologies" ("Rearrange")—nor David Reilly's voice, itself a modified version of Trent Reznor's minus the anger and calculated evilness, can make up for the flood of dopey couplets, like, "A crush I have on you/Your lover most true." Despite repeated revelations such as "We abuse ourselves," this certainly isn't emotionally engaging music.

>>> Anne Marie Cruz



**CATALOG**  
 RELEASED MAR. 24. WEB-  
 SITE AT RAVEN.CYBER  
 COMM.NET/~FLEM/GLU/  
**FILE UNDER**  
 INDUSTRIAL-STRENGTH  
 SANKA.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 NINE INCH NAILS, FILTER,  
 GRAVITY.

## hum

**Downward Is Heaven** RCA

IF THERE WERE SUCH A THING AS WHITE-ROOM grunge—oxymoronic as that sounds—Hum would be it. The Midwestern buzz-rock group spent three years on this follow-up to its widely praised *You'd Prefer An Astronaut*, so long it would be expected to return wholly transformed. *Downward Is Heaven* doesn't represent a leap forward so much as an intricate refinement of Hum's previous work, the obsessive labors of a group that believes its shimmering, metallic rock can somehow be perfected. It's fascinating to hear the band try, even if you sometimes feel as if it's suffocating the tracks rather than helping them. Often compared to fellow Illinois band Poster Children (whose 12 Inch Records released Hum's early albums), Hum replaces the Children's punchy, punky energy with a towering crunch that, when executed properly, can have dramatic impact. Many of the songs begin with some faint white noise, to set up tension before the band comes crashing in. The wall of drums and guitars 15 seconds into "If You Are To Bloom," coming just after a quiet acoustic guitar passage, is captivating. The rest of the album strives for this same drama and frequently connects, although the quiet-vs.-loud schtick can't overcome the turgidness of some of the songs. But at a time when everyone is trying a new style, it's inspiring to see one band try and communicate an old one.

>>> Chris Molanphy



**CATALOG**  
 RELEASED JAN. 27.  
 WEBSITE AT  
 WWW.PRARIENE.ORG/  
 ~HUM/NONEPAGE.HTML.  
**FILE UNDER**  
 GRUNGE PERFECTIONISM.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
 POSTER CHILDREN, HELMET,  
 SMASHING PUMPKINS.

## charlie hunter & pound for pound

### Return Of The Candyman

Blue Note

WHEN CHARLIE HUNTER, THE BAY AREA ACID jazz guitarist, signed with Blue Note, he wasn't just whistling Dixie on his custom-made eight-string guitar. Over the course of three albums on the hip jazz label founded in 1939, Hunter has consciously and deliberately evoked the spirit of Blue Note gone by, hearkening back especially to the '50s and '60s days when the label was pretty much the ultimate shit as far as jazz was concerned. He's used the same classic Blue Note design for his album covers, he's had "cooking sessions" in the studio where everybody jams on unexpected pop tunes; he's invented his own new boogaloo dance crazes; he's done concept albums of inspired cover tunes; he's even indulged in a little bit of genre-bending, this-is-our-music defiance just to rattle the hackles of staid jazz types. And he's still packing kids into clubs, so he must be doing something right. For fans of the eight-string guitarist, *Return Of The Candyman* is yet another great album, and musically, it's all about vibes, baby, lots and lots of vibes. Hunter drops the saxophone that usually augments his group and instead brings in vibraphonist Stefon Harris, whose tinkling, mellow tones give an extra laid-back, Roy Ayers-ish quality to the whole affair. It may not be Hunter's best album, but it will be the one to make even the most skeptical listener step back and say that Charlie Hunter is da man.

>>> James Lien

## junkie xl

### Saturday Teenage Kick Roadrunner

TOM HOLKENBORG IS A DUTCH REMIX DJ GOING international with a blend of dancefloor electronica, meaty guitar riffs and the muscular raps of Rudeboy. And while you'd think artists from Amsterdam would avoid casual jokes about junkies, Holkenborg's friends ironically call him a "junkie" because he's a workaholic; XL stands for "expanding limits," also the title for a mid-tempo strut which boasts turntable scratching and a cruising-in-a-Camaro groove. Holkenborg has studied dancefloor psychology, and knows how to structure effects and when to pull a fast sonic switch. "Billy Club" is an irresistible, stooped rave tune cut with zooming guitars and a slice of wah-wah. On the title track and several others, Holkenborg unabashedly models arena-ready anthems, layering fat beats, churning big guitars and undulating synthesizers. But more isn't always more. Holkenborg flirts with melodies but trades on maxed-out dynamics, which can grow tiresome. But he has an ace in the hole: Rudeboy, who contributes his hyper, and decidedly non-linear raps to tracks like the furious "Underachievers" and "Melange." As leader of the underrated Dutch group Urban Dance Squad, Rudeboy is well



**DATALOG**  
RELEASED MAR. 10.  
**FILE UNDER**  
HAIGHT-ASHBURY ACID JAZZ.  
**R.I.V.L.**  
JAHNROQUAL, MEDESKI MARTIN AND WOOD, BLAXPLOITATION SOUNDTRACKS.

versed in crossover funk. His anarchic energy elevates the project. The smart, salty groove of "Metrolike" takes its cue from Rudeboy's insinuating word-game—seemingly on-the-spot lyrics that lance the music industry. When the two tastes go well together, it suggests Junkie XL could "expand" into a band and really pack a pump.

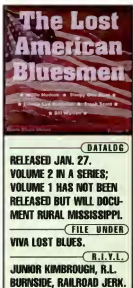
>>> Danny Housman

## the lost american bluesmen

### Various Artists Midnight Creeper

WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT THE BLUES IN 1998, there are really a few entirely different things you could be discussing. There's the slick, showy, Vegas-style blues of Buddy Guy, B.B. King and the House Of Blues hamburger chain, and there's the kind of Southern blues you hear on AM radio in the deep South. And then there's the raw blues. Although the grist of the blues has been watered down and incorporated into mainstream culture, there's still some authentic blues happening. If you know when and where to look, the real, raw, scrappy blues can still be heard in a few rough-and-tumble clubs of Chicago's South Side, as this compilation attests. Like blues archaeologists driving off the beaten roads to find long-lost country bluesmen of the Delta, this record combs the clubs and dives looking for raw undiscovered blues that's close to the bone. The result, heard on these 15 tracks recorded in an out-of-the-way studio in Illinois, is one of the best blues records of, oh, the last 15 years or so. The artists heard on *The Lost American Bluesmen*—guys like Sleepy Otis Hunt, Bill Warren and Jimmie Lee Robinson—may not be exactly household names, but when the world hears their gravelly throated, hard-pummeling, sloppy-drunk Chicago blues, their names will instantly be added to the blues honor rolls.

>>> James Lien



**DATALOG**  
RELEASED JAN. 27.  
VOLUME 2 IN A SERIES;  
VOLUME 1 HAS NOT BEEN  
RELEASED BUT WILL DOCUMENT  
RURAL MISSISSIPPI.  
**FILE UNDER**  
VIVA LOST BLUES.  
**R.I.V.L.**  
JUNIOR KIMBROUGH, R.L. BURNSIDE, RAILROAD JERK.

## lotion

### Lotion spinART

IN POPULAR MUSIC, AS IN HIGH SCHOOL, IT'S THE B-average students who never receive their fair due. The A+ eggheads (insert current critical darlings here) waltz off with superlatives and scholarships, while the party-hearty C set coasts along, enjoying the benefits of being one of the crowd (Matchbox 20, Days Of The New, ad nauseam). And bands like New York foursome Lotion remain woefully under-appreciated, subsisting on the kudos of a handful of champions who appreciate that their subtleties aren't shortcomings. Lotion's eponymous third LP possesses all the requisite ingredients for greatness: slippery melodic hooks that suggest countless '80s new wave hits that John Q. Public only needed an extra decade to finally appreciate ("Feedback Queen," "West Of



**DATALOG**  
RELEASE DATE: APR. 2.  
**FILE UNDER**  
MOST LIKELY TO BE OVERLOOKED.  
**R.I.V.L.**  
CRACKER, WEEZER, KARK'S FLOWERS.

Here”); big ass guitars (“Mr. Mosquito”) and the distinctive vocals of Tony Zajkowski; flashes of lyrical brilliance that rarely seem smug (“I Love Me (Vol. 1)”) plays connect-the-dots with couplets like “She French kisses/the map of the East Village”). In an era when merely being an outstanding rock band has somehow become detrimental to a group’s future with either pole of the music-buying public, this quartet remains defiantly idiosyncratic, yet never willfully quirky. The masses don’t deserve Lotion, but Lotion certainly deserves the masses.

>>> Kurt B. Reighley

a thick, ominous mix to proceedings, displaying both his formidable turntable skills and a dark sense of the absurd. *Western Lands* is a cohesive group project that memorializes Bill Burroughs while pointing towards possible music styles of the future.

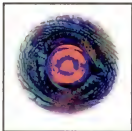
>>> Mitch Myers

## material

### The Road To Western Lands (Remixes)

Worldly-Triloka

THIS DISC IS A SONICALLY ADVANCED TRIBUTE TO the late, iconoclastic writer, William S. Burroughs. In 1989, Bill Laswell and his group Material constructed *Seven Souls*, a musical soundscape accompanied by Burroughs’s distinctive voice and his surreal musings on mortality and isolation. Remixed here by Laswell and four contemporary DJs/producers, Burroughs’s own words are imaginatively recontextualized into a moving, electronic elegy to the vastly influential author. Expounding on the ancient Egyptian mythology of death, Burroughs is contorted under the reverential guidance of these aural technicians. Material’s original dub/funk/jazz fusion is updated with ’90s studio advancements, so we are presented with a work that combines spoken word, invigorating instrumentals and modern electronica. Talvin Singh contributes his electro-Anglo/Asian spin on Material’s liquid groove, while Spring Hill Jack employs a subliminally based, ambient production style to Burroughs’s recitations. DJ Soul Slinger exhibits a harder edge, pushing beats to the forefront and reducing Burroughs to almost ornamental status. DJ Olive brings



RELEASED MAR. 24.  
 FILE UNDER  
 ILLBIEVIT DUB/SPOKEN  
 WORD FUSION.  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 BILL LASWELL, TALVIN  
 SINGH, DEAD CITY RADIO.

## gary numan

Exile Eagle-Cleopatra

GARY NUMAN ONCE ENJOYED ENOUGH POPULARITY to release three #1 UK albums in a row. Yet while his chilly little soundscapes were daring for their day, his aesthetic was limited. He’s continued recording since, but he hasn’t released an LP worth more than a cursory listen since 1982’s *I, Assassin*. *Exile*, his first studio album in three years, was completed last summer, when the new Numania—the *Random* tribute CDs, his own *Premiere Hits* anthology—was raging. Clearly, amidst all the celebration, the artist seems to have figured out what people like best about him, and concentrated on emphasizing those elements. And it works. Because like David Bowie (the artist he’s most often accused of ripping off), Numan does his best work when he clearly defines his creative context, then creates musical content that stays within those boundaries. These nine tracks mark a return to the eerie, apocalyptic synth swells (dressed up with the occasional surging guitar) and xenophobic vocal performances of his past. Adding further coherence, lyrically *Exile* seeks to reinterpret various Biblical episodes from the point of view “that God and the Devil, Heaven and Hell are one and the same.” No wonder Marilyn Manson is a fan. Twenty years after his debut, one of the weirdest eccentrics ever to achieve mainstream stardom has finally come full circle.

>>> Kurt B. Reighley

RELEASED FEB. 10.  
 WEBSITE AT  
[HTTP://AFE.SIMPLEPLANET.COM/](http://afe.simpleplanet.com/)  
 FILE UNDER  
 CLASSIC SYNTH-POP.  
 R.I.Y.L.  
 VINTAGE GARY NUMAN,  
 PULSARS, GRAVITY KILLS.



# THE AMAZING ROYAL CROWNS

Album in stores April 7.

CATCH THE BAND LIVE IN A CITY NEAR YOU!



## original harmony ridge creek dippers

**The Original Harmony Ridge Creek Dippers**  
Creek Dippers

AS ONE HALF OF THE JAYHAWKS' SINGING/songwriting/guitar playing team, Mark Olson was responsible for some American roots rock gems, and his departure from the group in late 1995 left a serious question mark where his bright vocal harmonies and bittersweet lyrics once shined. The Original Harmony Ridge Creek Dippers is Olson's new muse, a homegrown recording project written and recorded (as well as sold and distributed) by himself with help from his wife, Victoria Williams. Along with multi-instrumentalist Mike Russell, the two have crafted a relatively quiet, unassuming country folk record, marked by Olson's graceful melodies and touches of Williams's oddball art-folk sensibility. Given the brilliance of some of the Jayhawks' Olson-penned tunes, it's obvious that he isn't trying his hardest here, but the album's relaxed atmosphere seems to have opened a window to a slightly more heartfelt and personal chapter in his songbook. The songs consist primarily of Olson's sweetly forlorn voice and some acoustic guitar or harmonica, with Williams occasionally providing her warbling soprano as backing. Russell adds some important emotional color with his aching violin strains, but it's mostly Olson's offhanded melodic gift that provides these rough song sketches with their enduring charm. The album's most rewarding moments come, however, when Williams's playful spirit provides a melodic and emotional foil to Olson's generally darker, downtempo material.

>>> Colin Helms



**CATALOG**  
RELEASED OCT. 10, 1997.  
PRIMARYLY AVAILABLE VIA  
MAIL ORDER.  
**FILE UNDER**  
UNASSUMING COUNTRY-  
FOLK.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
HARVEST-ERA NEIL YOUNG,  
VIC CHESNUTT, PALACE.

## pacific ocean

**Birds Don't Think They're Flying** **Enchanté**

THE LINE-UP FOR THE PACIFIC OCEAN IS A DEAD giveaway: Stick one-half of Containe and a former member of Versus in the same studio together and, as one might expect, the resulting mix is a milder version of Versus. Enter bassist Connie Lovatt, the softer side of Containe (a duo also featuring Fontaine Toups of Versus), and drummer/guitarist Ed Baluyut. Their first album, *Birds Don't Think They're Flying*, is a terrific little recording minus some of the guitar drama which drives the other band with Baluyuts. What's left behind are appealing, soft-spoken songs of casual melancholy. Lovatt and Baluyut are nicely suited to each other, perhaps because they're traversing territory so well explored amongst their circle of friends. Witness the way the guitar and bass lines roll off each other perfectly on "Letter/Doctor" and "Two Twenty." Vocally, Lovatt comes off as a friendlier, more sweetly innocent cousin to Toups, as if pessimism were a hopeful proposition. Even though Ed Baluyut possesses the same disaffected voice his brother, Richard, plies in Versus, the vocal interplay between the duo on "If I Could Fall" is effectively haunting. The album is too short, though, clocking in at under half an hour; there's plenty of room for more songs in the same, delicately melancholic vein.

>>> Anne Marie Cruz

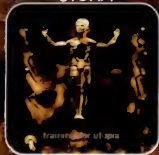
"If you think country is still about big hair and blue eye shadow, you haven't listened to it for 20 years, and you probably think that Elton John is still wearing platforms."

>>> Trisha Yearwood, on the state of country western music

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

# new

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## perfume tree

**Feeler** World Domination

IS IT ACTUALLY POSSIBLE TO BE TOO ETHEREAL? Can one conjure up an aural identity that goes well beyond dreamy? Vancouver's Perfume Tree dares to ask these and other musical questions on its fourth full-length CD, *Feeler*. While Jane Tilley's ghostly vocal excursions meld effortlessly with the electronic milieu provided by Bruce Turpin and Pete Lutwyche, there is a slight element of sonic overkill in Perfume Tree's patented, blissed-out sound. Actually, the trio's divine instrumental passages hold up quite well and draw the listener into an inverted omniverse of subliminal sound. With drum 'n' bass interludes stacked on top of atmospheric drones and Tilley's vaporous musings, the whole experience can become a bit ponderous. Although the stylized soundscapes evoke a profound, otherworldly perspective and their lush, synthetic environments are tailored to absolute perfection, Perfume Tree is often missing one essential quality—soul. More than background music, yet too elusive to become a meaningful soundtrack to the movie of your life, *Feeler* is a mixed bag of sequencers, programming, guitars and samplers. Still, if you're slightly depressed and absolutely refuse to come downstairs for dinner no matter how nicely your folks ask, this disc might be for you.

>>> Mitch Myers



RELEASE DATE: APR. 17.

FILE UNDER

ATMOSPHERIC ROCKTRONICA.

R.I.Y.L.

COCTEAU TWINS, LISA GERRARD/DEAD CAN DANCE, SLOWDIVE.



RELEASE DATE: APR. 14.

FILE UNDER

QUIRKY GUITAR POP.

R.I.Y.L.

FLAMING LIPS, PAVEMENT, HOME.

## pure

**Feverish** Mammoth

SINCE ITS LAST ALBUM, PURE MADE THE BRILLIANT discovery that—Eureka!—effects pedals can be a godsend. The Vancouver band has always been a pop sharpshooter, able to kick out catchy, smart-alecky tunes that pair amusing lyrical anecdotes with a steady buzz of chords and snappy rhythms. Those strengths are no less apparent on *Feverish*, but by paying greater attention to the sounds it's making, Pure has added a whole new dimension to its music. "Pay Your Way," for instance, includes exotic-style jungle sounds, violin and organ, while "My Surfboard And My Dog" uses a cool, oriental-sounding guitar part. On "Four Cups Of Jo," the guitars have an unexpectedly light, ephemeral quality, but "New Wave Cowboys" features a thick slab of reverb and echoey vocals. A fuzzed-out hum permeates the entire album, but it never muddles or distorts the songs. The effect is more like that of the haze that hangs in front of the morning sun: When the rays of light peak through the thin veil of clouds, they seem all the brighter by comparison. Pure's music is completely joyful and every bit of weird noise, every little wah-wah, is just an extra little treat. As the voice that introduces "Sunshine And Happy Hour" says, "I don't know what you're doing in there, but it sounds pretty good in my headset."

>>> Jenny Elisca

## pitchshifter

[www.pitchshifter.com](http://www.pitchshifter.com) DGC

IT SOUNDS AS IF PITCHSHIFTER CAME UP WITH THE sound for [www.pitchshifter.com](http://www.pitchshifter.com) while accidentally listening to one of its previous LPs at 45 rpm: Everything is sped up, more trebly, and bordering on frantic. Pitchshifter started life as an archetypal grind-core band on England's Earache label, with Godflesh-derived guitar mangling, slowly throbbing bass lines and pounding, but phlegmatic, drum programs. [www.pitchshifter.com](http://www.pitchshifter.com) is every bit as devastating and flattening, but asks the question, "What if we gave the juggernaut a rocket engine?" Pitchshifter has entirely rebuilt its percussive underpinnings, propelling its songs with hard-step drum 'n' bass beats. The drum machine's frenetic flurries pull everything else in their wake into lockstep double-time. The massive bass lines still dominate the songs, but the guitars and samples are higher-pitched and squawky. And J.S. Leyden has revamped his singing technique in order to keep up: Instead of guttural howling, he now spits out his left-leaning screed in a snot-nosed, Rotten-esque sneer. Sometimes it seems nothing more than digitally processed punk rock, but Pitchshifter's freshest moments virtually explode with precise fury and slamming percussion. It's an exciting step forward for both electronic music and for metal.

>>> David Jarman



RELEASE DATE: APR. 7.

WEBSITE AT

WWW.MAGICMETAL.NET/

~JGOMER/PITCHSHIFTER.HTML.

FILE UNDER

BREAKBEAT INDUSTRIAL-METAL.

R.I.Y.L.

PRONG, MINISTRY, ATARI TEENAGE RIOT.

## rachid

**Prototype** Universal

ON HIS INCREDIBLY FINE DEBUT, *PROTOTYPE*, 23-year-old singer/songwriter/producer Rachid creates an experimental urban landscape that would do Seal proud. At the same time, he has designed a powerfully minimal ambience that would please followers of the Bauhaus. Over the course of 12 songs, the New Jersey native, whose father and uncle were members of Kool & The Gang, seamlessly intertwines blunted old school beats, drum 'n' bass atmospherics, trippin' grooves and discordant goth guitar riffs with a storytelling style that is similar to Morrissey's dark, blunt and brutally poignant. On "Pride," Rachid sings, "Well/It's over now/I'm breaking down/I gotta clean up this mess/You made inside." Perhaps the somewhat self-absorbed—or is that sensitive?—Moz, who has had his fair share of life's heartaches and sexuality dilemmas, could learn a lesson or two from Rachid, who delves into topics uncommon for a soul artist. Or perhaps Rachid could learn from Morrissey's fuller examination of what it means to be an outsider. On the album's exquisite closing track, "Backtotheroom," Rachid confesses, "They want to try me/Call me a sissy/They tried to rough me up/See if I'm man enough/I feel so ugly/I change my body/Just rearrange me... Oh mother dear." Rarely does an album come along that is as hopeless as it is hopeful. *Prototype* is that album.

>>> Michael Paoletta



RELEASE DATE: APR. 28.

FILE UNDER

EXPERIMENTAL SOUL.

R.I.Y.L.

SEAL, OLIVE, JHELISA.

## rebekah

**Remember To Breathe** Elektra

THEY'VE FINALLY DONE IT. THEY'VE FINALLY figured out how to genetically splice Jewel and Tracy Chapman. That's a little unfair to Rebekah, but not *that* unfair: Her gorgeously melismatic voice and wide-eyed we-care-a-lot lyrics make it pretty clear where her aesthetic is coming from. There's something curiously '70s about her first album, *Remember To Breathe*, not just in the slick competence of the rock musos backing her up, but in the hit-plus-filler construction of the record—the hit being “Sin So Well,” the best conflation of sex and religion since Prince discovered the Internet. Unfortunately, she can't sustain its invention for 45 minutes. At best, her lyrics are the kind of simple profundity that goes into high-school notebooks for a reason (“Heaven's kinda far but I swear that when I'm coming it's close”); at worst, they're the kind of thing that never comes out of high-school notebooks for a reason (“Hey genius, how are you an expert when no real genius are you?”), and the melodies they're set to have been well-traveled by the most recent generation of earnest young women with guitars. But Rebekah gets them over with grace, fluidity and stylishness, which puts her in the curious position of being a performer who's considerably more interesting than her material.

>>> Douglas Wolk



**BATALDB**  
**RELEASED MAR. 24.**  
**FILE UNDER**  
**SINGER/SONGWRITER,**  
**EMPHASIS ON THE SINGER.**  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
**JEWEL, CARLEEN**  
**ANDERSON, ALAMS MORIS-**  
**SETTE'S BALLADS.**

## semisonic

**Feeling Strangely Fine** MCA

ACCOMPLISHED MUSICIANS ASPIRING TO POP craftsmanship beyond three-chord bashing face an uphill battle. Their songs must pack enough instant wallop to hold an audience until the subtler charms gradually seep in. Luckily for Semisonic, it's hit upon the digital equivalent of Now & Later candy. Instrumentation runs deeper than the band's three-man configuration implies; a string section makes multiple appearances, and electric piano plays nearly as prominent a role as guitar in the high-gloss mix. Frontman Dan Wilson has left behind the soaring harmonies and psychedelic excursions of his former band Trip Shakespeare (which included Semisonic bassist John Munson), but his angelic voice remains a formidable weapon. The handful of mid-tempo numbers driven by Wilson's pristine acoustic guitar reveals a Difford/Tillbrook-like knack for making a mature composition sound effortless. But Semisonic's real strength is being a crunchy guitar band, suggesting Matthew Sweet's finer moments. The peak occurs on “Singing In My Sleep,” a song about trading message-laden mix tapes as a courtship ritual, in which a simple Wurlitzer piano riff stubbornly contradicts Jake Slichter's insistent backbeat. *Feeling Strangely Fine* has enough hooks to induce repeated listening, and enough meat to reward return visits.

>>> Glen Saravady



**BATALDB**  
**RELEASED: MAR. 24.**  
**WEBSITE AT**  
**WWW.SEMISONIC.COM.**  
**FILE UNDER**  
**INTELLIGENT, POLISHED POP.**  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
**MATTHEW SWEET, AMICE**  
**MANN, TODD RUNDGREN.**

## servotron

**Entertainment For Humans (Second Variety)**

Lookout!

THE USE OF CHEAP GIMMICKRY HAS COME TO BE, IN the increasingly “serious” independent rock world of would-be jazzbos and the like, more and more distasteful. But wait a minute. Are the pretentious “avant” artists stabbing blindly at classic musical oeuvre's coping any less shlick than cheap robot-suit, neo-futurist, manifesto-spinning electronic punk rockers with a lot of TVs? Probably not. And it doesn't take a genius to figure out who, in the long run, is having more fun, or at least whose audience is. Servotron's attempt to fuse the camp of the past (like, how new wave tends to sound today) with the camp of the future (lots of “cyber” posturing) comes out quite well in the end. The Kate Pierson role of yesteryear is now a hip robot girl, and so on. The only thing these kids do better than carefully hound their—for lack of a better word—“angle,” though, is deliver the punk rock. While some songs on *Entertainment Program* falter (too much robot girl), “Serve, Obey, Guard Men From Harm” is Buzzcocks-inspired bliss, and the spiny, spatial sounds of Wire creep in throughout the record. More analog than digital, Servotron's guitar gimmicks work marvelously well here, spanning the “Lost in Space” realm all the way to modern pop punk.

>>> Liz Clayton



**BATALDB**  
**RELEASED MAR. 6.**  
**WEBSITE AT**  
**WEB1.ANDREW.CMU.EDU/**  
**USER/TR1F/SERVOTRON/.**  
**FILE UNDER**  
**'50'S ROBOTS, '80'S POP,**  
**'90 KEYBOARDS.**  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
**BUZZCOCKS, DEVO, SIX**  
**FINGER SATELLITE.**

## shellac

**Terraform** Touch And Go

REALLY, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A STEVE Albini project? A touching string section, a country twang, perhaps a little drum-'n'-bass/electronic suite à la Goldie? Hell no, you know what you're gonna get. It's all laid out for you, surrounded by four cinderblock walls and a few iron crossbeams up top. It's Shellac, man. There will be no melodic within. Shellac sounds like its guitarist/principle singer: the tin-backed guitar scrape that has driven every Albini-related project since Big Black's *Lungs*; the bitter and salty voice (although cracks do appear in his icy demeanor), and the rhythm section of Todd Trainer and Bob Weston, which truly drives *Terraform*. More taut than even 1995's Shellac debut, *At Action Park*, *Terraform* displays an overwhelming sense of restraint; the sound of a guitar doesn't arrive on the record until (gasp) almost four minutes into it, and an abrasive chord doesn't chime in until more than six minutes have passed. And as often as sheets of guitar rule a song, a delicate pattern is placed within the confines of the rhythm with the precision of a scientist or savant. Swallowed whole, with an expert sequencing that creates a rolling drama, *Terraform* is as fat and firm a record as you're likely to hear, a true celebration of the machine-like combustion of three musicians working to create one super colossal sound.

>>> Randall Roberts



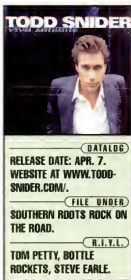
**BATALDB**  
**LP RELEASED FEB. 10; CD**  
**RELEASE DATE: MAY 18.**  
**FILE UNDER**  
**CHICAGO GUY ROCK.**  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
**BIG BLACK, JESUS LIZARD,**  
**GANG OF FOUR.**

## todd snider

Viva Satellite MCA

TODD SNIDER'S *VIVA SATELLITE* DOES WHAT MOST good road albums do: It makes you twist up the volume knob on the dashboard and sing along. It's a loud, brash, rootsy affair, with plenty of stops at the barroom to escape wrongdoing girlfriends. Snider has no qualms about staying on the roads off traveled, and his vocal styles provide signposts that leave no questions about whose route he's following. When the first two tracks perfectly capture Tom Petty's strained Southern accents and the third is a rough-and-tumble cover of Steve Miller's "The Joker" that aches to be heard as a sing-along encore after a sweaty late-night set, you know you're in for a familiar ride. That beginning makes it hard not to play name-the-source with the rest of the set—a little Steve Earle acoustic blues ("Can't Complain"), a stop in Springsteen's "Darlington County" for "Rocket Fuel," even Mick Jagger's version of a drawl on "Doublewide Blues." Thing is, he does them all well, and the band has just the right balance of casual drive and abandon to make the ride comfortable but not overly recognizable. Somehow Snider works his sources to his benefit; the familiarity breeds contentment, and at the end of the night his songs are the ones that you'll be singing.

>>> Steve Klinger



**TODD SNIDER**  
ALBUM  
**RELEASE DATE: APR. 7.**  
**WEBSITE AT WWW.TODD-SNIDER.COM.**  
FILE UNDER  
**SOUTHERN ROOTS ROCK ON THE ROAD.**  
R.I.Y.L.  
**TOM PETTY, BOITTE ROCKETS, STEVE EARLE.**

## styrenes

We Care, So You Don't Have To Seat

THIS INTENSE DISC IS FOR THOSE WHO PREFER A band's lyrics to be gritty urban poetry, its vocals coated with whiskey, its artsy pop performed with lush accents of sound, and its musical resume approaching novella-length. This is the first long-player in a decade from the Styrenes, a legendary, 25-year-old, Cleveland-based originator of Velvets-inspired underground noise-pop. Released on the heels of '97's retrospective *Those Were Different Times*: 1973-76 CD, *We Care* is their finest recording with vocalist Mike Hudson, writer for the *Irish Echo* and vet of blistering '70s punk act the Pagans. Hudson's voice has been so abused it's a rough-sounding, deep skeletal husk; he sounds like Tom Waits's uncle who never left skid row. The backing is expansive, perfectly suited to these moody, ruminative pop songs—it's a superlative '70s singer-songwriter sound, what John Cale achieved with his better combos. Fans will find *We Care* the Styrenes' most consistent and conventionally structured effort yet. The real standout is "Heavy Streets," a mod-ish, three chord, upbeat ditty that happens to be about a young woman "strung-out on methadone." And while their cover of "Venus In Furs" is decent (if not redundant), it's the piano-driven tracks, like the ruminative "Thanks For Coming Home," that weld together a wealth of disparate influences behind Hudson's heavy words.

>>> Mike McConigal



**STYRENES**  
ALBUM  
**RELEASED MAR. 18.**  
FILE UNDER  
**POETIC PUNK.**  
R.I.Y.L.  
**VELVET UNDERGROUND, PATTI SMITH GROUP, TOM WAITS, PERE UBU.**

## sonic youth/jim o'rourke

Muzikaj Perspektivoj SYR

THIS IS THE FINAL INSTALLMENT IN A SERIES OF three self-released EPs Sonic Youth has quietly issued over the past year in what appears to be the band's valiant attempt to demonstrate its continued relevance by becoming the hardest working avant-rock group in the avant-rock business. You can't shake a stick in the indie world these days without hitting a Lee Ranaldo solo disc, a free-"jazz" odyssey with Thurston Moore's name on it, Kim Gordon's Free Kitten, or Steve Shelley drumming on a Cat Power tune. Which is nothing to complain about because Sonic Youth remains uniquely willing and able to challenge itself and its audience with a minimum of fuss and about as much ragtag charm as anyone could ever hope to muster against a gray-and-white backdrop of detuned discord. That's probably as accurate a description of the three tracks on *Muzikaj Perspektivoj* as anybody's going to offer without resorting to onomatopoeic whooshes, shongzzzzs, and weechumwees, other than to say that the 55-minute disc teams the band up with experimental guitarist Jim O'Rourke (late of Gastr Del Sol); offers little in the way of lyrics, melodies or 4/4 beats, and features titles and credits in Esperanto. Think of it as Sonic Youth revisiting the disquieting cacophony of its formative years (i.e. the anxious drones and fragile feedback of *Confusion Is Sex*), digging back to its roots in music that was a decade or two ahead of its time back in '83.

>>> Matt Ashare



**SONIC YOUTH/JIM O'ROURKE**  
EP  
ALBUM  
**RELEASED MAR. 2. WEBSITE AT WWW.GEO-CITIES.COM/SUNSET-STRIP/PALMS/5888/.**  
FILE UNDER  
**AVANT-ROCK**  
R.I.Y.L.  
**JOHN ZORN, DEREK BAREY, GASTR DEL SOL.**

## this perfect day

C-60 550

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CARDIGANS, WHOSE cutesy retro girlic shick comes with a sexy wink-wink and a supple nudge-nudge, the one crucial leavening agent missing from most of Sweden's recent host of pop bands is irony. Despite the wryness hinted at in its name, This Perfect Day is missing it in spades on its US debut. Which is almost refreshing in a crunchey Mentos sort of way, thanks to the unabashed enthusiasm with which these guys offer slicked-up, guitar- and synth-driven nostalgia that would have already sounded dated back in 1987, the year TPD released its first single. But the time-capsule spell is broken, and good will dissipates on the third track, "Dolphins," where singer Mats Eriksson errs with an all too earnest delivery of the unforgivably bad lyric "If I was a dolphin lost and lonely out at sea/Would you go swimming beyond the coral reefs looking for me?," which might not be so bad if 1) he were kidding, or 2) the rest of the song weren't actually about dolphins (it is). As hard as it is to get past a clunker like that, TPD does pull off serviceable imitations of Lloyd Cole/Tommy Keeney sentimental heartbreak, though it manages to kick off another tune with the egregious line "I was a fish trapped in a bowl of water/Always made to look the fool."

>>> Matt Ashare



**THIS PERFECT DAY:**  
ALBUM  
**RELEASE DATE: APR. 12.**  
FILE UNDER  
**BITTERSWEET NEW WAVE.**  
R.I.Y.L.  
**MODERN ENGLISH, MARSHALL CRENshaw, LLOYD COLE**



## mixed signals

How does a 10-year veteran DJ get himself honored as "Best New DJ" of 1997 by a prestigious British dance rag? Don't ask international "tech-house" hero **TERRY FRANCIS**: He's not quite sure how he got the title either. Maybe it's because last year, Wiggle, the UK club where Francis holds court, became a well-known Mecca for those who like their warm house iced with cold techno—Francis's 50/50 mixture of each extreme is a potent concoction that has earned him recognition as the master in his field. *Architecture* (Pagan) is a 16-track mix demonstrating how Francis constructs his aural edifices. Deep, luxurious bass lines are held up by thumping kick-drums and surreal synthetic melodies, resulting in a 70-minute technological mind trip that still manages to touch your soul. Prolific producers like House Of 909 ("Shakedown"), Presence ("Better Day") and Aubrey ("Marathon") find themselves in the midst of Francis's mesmerizing mix...

House music will never die and that's because it possesses an energy more soulful, uplifting and empowering than any other dance music. Chicago's *Cajual* and New York's *Twisted America* are two



labels whose deep, flowing house grooves provide clubbers with the sounds of dancefloor salvation circa 1998. With DJ/producer **MARK GRANT** at the wheel, *A Taste Of Cajual* (Cajual) is a 16-cut guided mix of the label's most recent releases, distinguished by the smooth, luxurious layering of tunes by Green Velvet, Cajmere, Dajae and more. Mixing elements of garage, hard and deep house, the disc is an enlightening overview of the diverse sounds coming from late-'90s Chicago. DJ **PETER RAUHOFFER** (of Club 69, Size Queen and House Heroes) serves up a storming mix of thumping New York tribal house with *Twist This Pussy* (Twisted America), a 14-track tour through the label's recent catalog of tunes—songs that have driven NYC clubs like Twilo to worldwide recognition. Like the Big Apple itself, the mix is dramatic, intriguing and energetic, with tracks by Club 69, Size Queen and Moogroove providing the deep and devious underground house vibes.

—M. Tye Comer

# Tuscalero



## My way or The Highway



## Fourteen new songs Featuring "Paper Dolls"

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Additional Production by Alan Friedman for VIBE!

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## emma townshend

**Winterland** EastWest-Elektra

EMMA TOWNSHEND ARRIVES WITH ONE MAJOR piece of baggage: She is the daughter of Pete, the lead guitarist and guiding light of The Who. Fortunately, on her heartfelt debut, she eschews the penchant her father's band had for stadium rock, and instead, offers a sedate glimpse into the chilling world of a female singer-songwriter in the late '90s. Armed with nothing more than drums, piano and the occasional guitar, the 28-year-old makes sweeping attempts to reel the listener in with tales of jealousy ("The Last Time I Saw Sadie"), fractured morality ("Ghost Kitchen"), and the excesses of success ("Five-A-Side Football"). In the process, thanks to a highly fervent vocal delivery, she manages to keep the quiescent soundscape from reaching the mighty depths of despair (that it very well could have). Unfortunately, that's not enough. Townshend's means to an end are contrived—albeit sincerely—and bordering on the derivative. (She doesn't begin to stray from the usual piano-playing woman singer-songwriter conventions.) But all is not lost. The album does have highlights, including "The Ladder" and the aforementioned "Sadie," which showcase the complex emotions and feisty brilliance, respectively, that Townshend is more than capable of. Just give the girl some time.

>>> Michael Paoletta



**CATALOG**  
RELEASED MAR. 24.  
**FILE UNDER**  
SENSITIVE WOMAN AT THE PIANO.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
JANE SIBERRY, KATE BUSH,  
TORI AMOS.

## tuscadero

**My Way Or The Highway** Elektra

TUSCADERO STARTS ITS SOPHOMORE ALBUM WITH three songs that illustrate both the band's easy way with cheerful, exuberant pop riffs, and its engagingly skewed humor. "Queen For A Day" opens with a fuzzy riff, a sitar-like rejoinder, and a clipped, sexy come-on which turns out to be a head-fake: The song is a rapturous tribute to the omnisexual allure of a hot gay guy. The next tune, "Paper Dolls," counsels young girls to avoid fashion magazines' inducements to conformity. Although the sentiments are laudable, the message is confusing in light of the next song, "Freak Magnet," a witty complaint/confession about attracting weirdos. Similarly, while tempted by a few impulses to stray musically, singer-guitarists Melissa Farris and Margaret McCartney seem most comfortable sticking with three-chord structures and adding new wave keyboards or colorful arrangements on top. They also push their vocals and harmonies through the guts of the material, getting colorful mileage out of rudimentary wheels. "Not My Johnny" rides on an irresistible vocal interplay, but the juicy melodramatic "You've Got Your Pride" hints that the pair listened to both Pat Benatar and the Cramps in the '80s. In "Tickled Pink" the shy singer drinks herself silly over a cute guy at a bar; it takes a healthy dose of both sass and self-irony to rhyme "I am drunk and on the floor" with "I am woman, hear me roar!"

>>> Danny Housman



**CATALOG**  
RELEASE DATE: APR. 14  
WEBSITE AT  
WWW.LOGISTICS.COM/  
TUSCADERO/  
**FILE UNDER**  
GARAGE-Y NEW WAVE POP.  
**R.I.Y.L.**  
VERUCA SALT, B-52'S,  
POSTER CHILDREN.

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

**julie plug**

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## unsane

**Occupational Hazard** Relapse

EVEN UNSANE'S MOST ARDENT FANS WOULD HAVE to admit that the band has only one real idea made up of a few elemental parts: wall-to-wall distortion, screamed vocals, short songs about alienation, terse riffs, sinister grumbling bass lines, pain, big pedals, bigger amps, huge noise. Granted, it's a very good idea, and Unsane is engaged in as extreme an application of it as anyone, but it is still one idea. *Occupational Hazard* is more or less a replacement part for the previous few Unsane albums, stamped out of the same die. If anything, it's a tad slower than the thrasher-speed frenzy of *Scattered*, *Smothered*, and *Covered*, more along the lines of the band's early Matador releases—but "slower" is a relative term. It's still all meat-grinder riffs slathered on top of a pummeling, breakneck-tempo rhythm section. But this begs the question: Does Unsane need to change? Clearly not. In everyone's life, there are listening moments where only the purest in undistilled rage and hostility will suffice, and that's why Unsane exists. They're the musical equivalent of bashing someone with a lead pipe. Subtle, no; effective, yes.

>>> David Jarman



## scott weiland

**12 Bar Blues** Atlantic

IT'S EASY TO HATE *12 BAR BLUES* IF YOU'RE expecting a Stone Temple Pilots redux (or blues, for that matter). Surprisingly, for his first solo release, former STP vocalist Scott Weiland reorients his stylistic compass away from points Pacific northwest toward English glam rock. Abandoning his trademark growl in favor of nasal, Bowie-inspired vocals, Weiland maintains his former band's taste for shameless, but generally worthy, rip-offs. Especially good are "Lazydivey," itself a Beatles' catalogue, and the XTC-ish "Mockingbird Girl." Weiland tries to mesh all of the borrowed elements together in interesting ways; his experimenting includes the cabaret-flavored "Lady Your Roof Brings Me Down" (guest starring Sheryl Crow on accordion), chunky dance beats à la Tone Loc's "Wild Thing," theremin, mellotron, some Daniel Lanois and plenty of piano. Since his imitations are so ambitious, the crappy portions of the record (approximately half, mostly involving Weiland's repetitive, moronic screeching) are forgivable. Still, his jarringly silly lyrics ("A processed pig is white trash meat/Some people call it Spam"), superfluous use of numbers ("More deep than space #9"? Hello, *White Album*) and uneven execution serve as nagging reminders that this isn't Weiland's territory quite yet. The epic sprawl of glam rock does seem to suit him, though. Hopefully, he'll be this interesting next time around, without the shock element working to his advantage.

>>> Anne Marie Cruz



ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S CD

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>>> *Continued from page 24*

Currie sings "Lucky Like St. Sebastian," even mocking Currie's eye patch in pantomime. The audience members, many of whom have been waiting to glimpse Momus for nearly a decade, eat it up.

"Gilles and I did a European tour at the end of last year, and I thought he'd be appreciated in the States as a token Frenchman.... Normally, one's contained by the fear of ridicule, but I thought, 'Gilles and I don't care if we're ridiculed. Let's just be really camp and march about on stage pretending it's a fashion show....' The funniest thing that happened was in Washington, DC. The soundman was making a cassette for us and he hadn't realized that he'd left the microphone on and he was making all these comments like 'That French guy's going to get his ass kicked,' and 'Who are these guys—they're faggots, aren't they?' So I guess there can be a middle-American redneck reaction, which is only what we'd have expected."

With that kind of "aggressive normality" still prevalent, it's unlikely that Momus's insistence on sexual ambiguity—"I've made a big deal in songs about being gay even though I'm not gay," he explains—will move him from the research and development wing into the mainstream any time soon. On *Ping Pong's* epic "How To Get (And Stay) Famous," Currie (with relatively little distance between himself and Momus in this case) rails at God himself about his cult status: "I have friends, Lord/I've watched them one by one become famous/While they complimented my songs/I smiled in my corner alone/And watched their inner birds spread their wings and fly." Currie is more sanguine about his influence on such artists as Pulp, the Pet Shop Boys and White Town (as well as lesser-known groups like Jack and Orlando) in conversation than in song. "What changed for me is that now there's a whole generation of hands saying, 'We really like

what you were doing on your old albums,' and almost pastiching my style. And so I've come along and said, 'Hey, I'm better at being Momus than they are.' So I've kind of come back and snatched the signature back from them."

● **"His Majesty The Baby" by Momus appears on this month's CD**

## REVEREND HORTON HEAT

>>> *Continued from page 31*

trunkload of racy road stories: drunken run-ins with bouncers, deftly baiting a crowd until they're ready to kill him, even hitching a ride to one way-station gig in a stinky fish delivery truck. In concert, the Reverend works himself into such a fervor, his fans can't help but catch the spirit. Which makes him feel great, Heath cedes. "But I don't want to have to live up to that persona when I'm not doing it. I just want to be a normal guy who goes to lunch with my girlfriend, walks my dog around the neighborhood. And people in my neighborhood all know me as Jim. They know I'm the Reverend, and they think it's pretty funny. But you still gotta keep your lawn cut, keep your leaves out of the neighbors' yards."

The Reverend's records, though, are no joking matter. *Space Heater* is probably the most straightforward, pedal-to-the-metal disc in Heat's illustrious career, which kicked off on Sub Pop back in '92 with the scruff-necked *Smoke 'Em If You Got 'Em*. Written in-studio over a couple of grueling two-week sessions, and produced by Ed Stasium (Ramones, Motorhead, Living Colour), the new disc gleefully bounds from sinister spy tunes ("Mrs. Darkness") to galloping Southwestern instrumentals ("The Prophet Stomp," "Pride Of

San Jacinto") to stock-in-trade Rev-isms, like the flat-out rockabilly shout "Baby I'm Drunk." There's even a Spanish-sung quasi-punk cut dubbed "Cinco De Mayo," which, Heath says, was included in honor of "our big Latin contingent. Which has kinda always been there, because rockabilly in the '50s—the sound and the look—never really died in those communities. We're talking the low riders, the pegged slacks, the hair grease and, of course, all the swing dancing."

And, as if on cue, the Rev gets up from his seat in a commandeered hotel conference room, ambles over to the giant easel pad leftover from a corporate powwow, and magic-markers his graffiti street tag across the paper. A quick fluid "REV" followed by three dotted columns, "I-I-I"—two H's, if you use your imagination. This is a guy who definitely understands the importance of a good logo. "I'm not in the music business," he quips. "I'm in the T-shirt business!" Heath's sister oversees the band's lucrative merchandising arm, REVHO, which offers via mail order such hot Heat items as T-shirts, patches, work shirts, ball caps, embroidered jackets and even prayer cloths, with orders coming in from as far away as Finland, Australia and Belgrade.

"And I've never really been into acting, either," he continues. "But now all of a sudden I've got a Screen Actors Guild card!" Still, he confesses that he was shocked when he arrived on the *Drew Carey Show* set. The wardrobe folks were waiting for him, with a rare, lime-green Nudie suit worth over \$3,000. Then came the unexpected bonus: During the program's closing credits, Carey introduced the Reverend Horton Heat, then sat down with the cast to watch the group tear through a manic version of its "Now, Right Now!" number. And right about then, Heath cackles, it finally hit him. "Man! They're really givin' us a big ole plug here!"

● **"Lie Detector" by Reverend Horton Heat appears on this month's CD**

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BY JAN CHRISTE

## metal

top 25

- 1 PRO-PAIN  
Pip-Pain / Mayhem
- 2 MORBID ANGEL  
Formulas Fatal To The Flesh / Earache
- 3 UNSANE  
Occupational Hazard / Relapse
- 4 GOD DETHRONED  
The Grand Grimoire / Metal Blade
- 5 HATEBREED  
Satisfaction Is The Death Of Desire / Victory
- 6 RAMMSTEIN  
Schoenheit / Slash-London
- 7 TWO  
Voyagers / Nothing-Interoscope
- 8 OVERCAST  
Fight Ambition To Kill / Edison
- 9 COURSE OF EMPIRE  
Telegraphic Last Words /TVT
- 10 JUDAS PRIEST  
Jugulator / CNC International
- 11 IN FLAMES  
Wherache / Nuclear Blast America
- 12 DEFTONES  
Around The Fur / Haverick-WB
- 13 COALESCENCE  
Give Them Hops / Edison
- 14 DECIDE  
Serpents Of The Light / Roadrunner
- 15 NAPALM DEATH  
Breed To Brutality (EP) / Earache
- 16 STUCK MOJO  
Bishop / Century Media
- 17 CONVERGE  
Petitioning The Empty Sky / Equal Vision
- 18 HYPOCRISY  
The Final Chapter / Nuclear Blast America
- 19 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Gods Of Darkness / Nuclear Blast America
- 20 SUFFOCATION  
Dismale The Sun (EP) / Vulture
- 21 ENTOMBED  
To Ride, Shoot Straight And Speak The  
Truth / Music For Nations-Silvertone
- 22 KING DIAMOND  
Woods / Metal Blade
- 23 INCUBUS  
S.C.I.E.N.C.E. / Immortal-Epic
- 24 MOONSPELL  
Sin Pacado / Century Media
- 25 KMFDM  
KMFDM / Wax Trax!-TVT

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weekly Loud Rock charts, collected from CMJ's  
pool of progressive radio reporters.



## varathron

## Genesis Of Apocryphal Power (Cursed)

Metal bands love to sacrifice their singularity on the altar of slick professionalism. The opposite is a group like Havohej, whose brilliant *Black Perversion* EP seems to have been recorded in the back of a van using a jar of bees. Varathron isn't such an underachiever, although it is comprised of metal stylists willing to test a sonic backwater. This cache of demos and unreleased songs plays up Varathron's heartfelt vision. The Greek band approaches metal as if it were a classic horror film instead of a monster truck rally, and the results, though they communicate utter despair, are evocative and entertaining. The four ghouls in the band—Necroabyssius, Pyrophoros, Adrastos and Wolfen—are as brilliant in their way as director Ed Wood, film producer Roger Corman and actor Vincent Price. The hollow scrape of "Deep Beneath An Ancient Dominion" is hideous, like Throbbing Gristle at its best, but the theatrical eeriness reaches a pinnacle on "The Great Seal Of Graal," a minimal masterpiece of early radio drama.

Among the effects: a tinny, Slayerish guitar, cymbals akin to pie plates, and drums that sound like piles of rusty books. Not to mention the singer is freezing cold, and his vocal chords seem to be evacuating his throat. Everything rolls together perfectly to summon a lo-fi, creepy, late-night atmosphere.

a couple of years have passed since the fellows in **Morbid Angel** had anything to say for themselves, so the utter superiority of *Formulas Fatal To The Flesh* (Earache) is a jolt to the senses. In fact, it's phenomenal: the way every song tears off in eight chaotic directions at once, the lyrical attempts to fuse Sumerian mythology with Tony Robbins's late night hucksterism, and the overall rhythm of the unexpected that permeates Morbid Angel's music. *Formulas* compares favorably to the recent *Decide* CD, which sounds relatively wooden and one-dimensional. Then again, most anything would. Don't be fooled: *Morbid Angel* offers more complexity and variation here than there is in the entire Elliott Sharp catalog. The electronic selections are only a few amens short of Goldie, and elsewhere the guitars are weird and massive. No one has made as powerful, polished and inspiring a death metal statement in a long time... **Clotted Symmetric Sexual Organ** offers a similarly skewed, but more low-rent, psychedelic grind on its "Diversion Of Former Customary Trite Composition" 7" (Relapse). The progressive Tokyo troupe intersects its collapsible punch with all kinds of loose strings and cheap electronic malfunctions. It sounds like a better-articulated Brutal Truth, uniting a jumble of noise sources in search of new aggression... On *Machinegunnery Of Doom* (Full Moon Productions), **Indungeon** brings the latest in the ever expanding "war metal" genre. As with other bands in the category—Zyklon B, Niden Div. 186 and War—Indungeon presents an agnostic twist on black metal. The fast tempo, scum guitars and earthworm vocals are very similar, but where Emperor would rely on supernatural overtones, Indungeon inserts scuzzy compressed noise and World War II sound effects. Songs like "Battle Tank No. 1" and "Mayhemic Destruction" are music to the ears of those who like murky metal, and a cover of Bathory's "Die In Fire" has the right attitude for dying on a motorcycle... Indie rock group **GodheadSilo** is one of a pocket of hands (Karp, Today Is The Day) that gestures towards heaviness but never quite makes the mark of metal density. Though it's more Jesus Lizard than Satanic Slaughter, GodheadSilo's *Share The Fantasy* (Sub Pop) is worth mentioning anyway—both for the new ultra-metallic logo and cover art by Eric Stork, and for the band's unholy facial hair. If you can't bear 'em, join 'em—maybe Belle And Sebastian should start wearing true Scandinavian black metal corpse paint.

## smith &amp; mighty

DJ Kicks (Studio !K7)

Rob Smith and Ray Mighty have been the unfortunate victims of music industry disorganization and bureaucracy. Had their career been carefully tended to, they would be household names alongside Tricky and Massive Attack. Their gorgeous, underrated first full-length album, *Bass Is Maternal*, was self-released after a four-year delay. Currently at work on various indie projects, the pair has gone into the studio at the behest of German imprint !K7 to weave together a bunch of tracks



that make this collection by far the most exciting in the label's highly regarded *DJ Kicks* series (which has included entries from DJ Cam, Nicolette, Rockers Hi-Fi, Carl Craig and others). What makes these sets so compelling is that the artists/DJs choose the tracks themselves; they're not chosen to fulfill some set of marketing criteria. Thus, Smith & Mighty set the controls for the heart of the echo chamber, where breakbeats and bass lines collide like sub-atomic particles, bouncing off one another and constantly producing new shapes and forms. Opening this 24-track set is the jangling "Amid The Ether" by Blue & Red featuring Shandi I, followed by Smith & Mighty's breathtaking rendition of the Burt Bacharach/Hal David tune "Walk On By," set to a thunderous bass line that would make King Tubby proud. The mix then turns in the direction of reggae-influenced Bristol drum 'n' bass (all but one of the tracks here are from Bristol) on the likes of DJ Lynx, Flynn & Flora, and Gang Related. The seemingly effortless mix and the melancholic warp and woof of the selections make this a spine-chilling exercise.

many of you are familiar with names Ed Handley and Andy Turner, who formed the core of Black Dog Productions. That group set the tone for British electronic experimentation in the mid-to-late '80s, spawning an entire generation of bedroom musicians the fruits of whose work are only now coming to the surface. What is less well known is that under the **Plaid** moniker, these two have recorded some storming electro-charged tracks for the British cult label Clear, and more recently for the long-standing Warp organization. The good news is that their new album, *333*, is being made available for domestic consumption via Trent Reznor's Nothing imprint, distributed through Interscope. This is a highly significant event, for it ushers in a new wave of the new wave of electronica Stateside. The heavy, 808-driven "Extork" features Nicolette on vocals and veers between mechanical breakbeats and extra-terrestrial synth divers. "Ladyburst" is fueled by delicate xylophone notes and frog-like acid helches. *333* is a subtle, delicate piece of work that won't ensnare with easy hooks, but gets lodged in your cortex like a languorous, slow poison... The much-anticipated second installment of the *V Classic* series, **V Classic II** (Ultra), is now available on US shores and it does not disappoint, since the *V* roster continues to provide the most thrilling, suspenseful moments in contemporary drum 'n' bass. Witness DJ Die's volcanic "On Time," featuring the refrain "there goes trouble down the drain" followed by Scorpio's dangerous, careening "Trouble." The ominous tech-step fury of Ed Rush & Optical's "Naked Lunch" will strike fear into the hearts of pagans everywhere. DJ Krust's recent single "Warhead," which sat atop many drum 'n' bass DJs' charts for weeks, is included here, as is Lemon D's surprisingly mellifluous "Change," a real departure from his hit "This Is Los Angeles." This superb collection confirms that the *V* artists are working at the vanguard of contemporary electronics and their fecund imaginations are far from exhausted.

## dance top 25

- 1 DJ SHADOW  
*Preemptive Strike / Mo Wax/Tril-London*
- 2 DJ SPOOKY THAT SUBLIMINAL KID  
*Synthetic Fury (EP) / Asphodel*
- 3 GOLDFIE  
*Saltwaterz / Tril-London*
- 4 AIR  
*Moon Safari / Source-Caroline*
- 5 RONI SIZE/REPAZENT  
*New Forms / Talkin' Loud-Mercury*
- 6 FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY  
*Flower Of The Week / Metropolis*
- 7 RECEIVER  
*Chicken Milk / Cup Of Tea-Iron America*
- 8 C-TEC  
*Barbar / Wax Trax!-TVT*
- 9 HAWKE  
*Nanopadica / Sunburn*
- 10 DJ ACURACK  
*Nation State (12" EP) / Skilpisc*
- 11 TERRY LEE BROWN JR.  
*Chocolate Chords (EP)/"Skylark (12") / Plastic City-UCMG*
- 12 JAMIE MYERSON  
*"Rescue Me" (12") / Drum/Columbia-CMG*
- 13 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*Big Back'N' Beats / Wax Trax!-TVT*
- 14 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*Dark Techno-One Now-Nine / Quantanloop-21st Circuitry*
- 15 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*Narcosis / Moonshine*
- 16 INDIVIDUAL TOTEM  
*Mind Sculptures / Pendragon*
- 17 DJ VADIM  
*USSR Reconstruction / Ninja Tune (Canada)*
- 18 KMFDMM  
*KMFDM/DFM (EP) / Wax Trax!-TVT*
- 19 GARY NUMAN  
*Exile / Cloopatra*
- 20 GEVIN KEY  
*Music For Cats / Metropolis*
- 21 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*Spiritual Vibes / Hypnotic-Cloopatra*
- 22 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*In Flux: Drum 'N' Bass in Movement / BMJ-America*
- 23 VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*Deutscher Funk / Calpatria*
- 24 RAMMSTEIN  
*Sehnsucht / Slabz-London*
- 25 DJ KRUSH  
*Milight / Mo Wax/Tril-London*

Compiled from *CMJ New Music Report's* weekly RPM charts, collected from *CMJ's* pool of progressive radio reporters.



BY BRIAN COLEMAN

## hip-hop top 25



- 1 GANG STARR  
"You Know My Steez" / Neo Tribe-Virgin
- 2 2PAC  
"I'll Kill Down" (Remember Me) / Amaru-Jive
- 3 MOS DEF, Q-TIP & TASH  
"Bady Rock" / Rawkus
- 4 LOX  
"Money, Power & Respect" / Bad Boy-Arista
- 5 LORD TARIQ & PETER GUNZ  
"Deja Vu/Codaine" / Columbia
- 6 BUSTA RHYMES  
"When Disaster Strikes..." / Elektra-EEG
- 7 RAKIM  
"The 18th Letter" / Universal
- 8 ICE CUBE  
"We Be Clubbin'" / A&M
- 9 MASE  
"24 Hours To Live"/Marion World / Bad Boy-Arista
- 10 JAY-Z  
"In My Lifetime, Vol. 1" / Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam-Priority
- 11 CAPPADONNA  
"Real" / Razor Sharp-Epic
- 12 SOUNDTRACK  
"Belworth" / Interscope
- 13 COMMON  
"One Day I'll All Make Sense" / Relativity
- 14 COCOA BROVAZ  
"Spanish Harlem" / Duck Down-Priority
- 15 KING BRITT PRESENTS SYLK 130  
"When The Funk Hits The Fan" / Drum/Ruffhouse/Columbia
- 16 LL COOL J  
"Phenomena" / Def Jam-PG
- 17 DAS EFX  
"Rap Scholar" / EastWest-EEG
- 18 LUNIZ AND REDMAN  
"Hypnotize" / Neo Tribe-Virgin
- 19 WYCLEF JEAN/REFUGEE ALL-STARS  
Presents "The Carnival" / Ruffhouse/Columbia
- 20 CANNIBUS  
"How We Roll" / Universal
- 21 ONYX  
"But 'Em Down" / Def Jam-Polygram
- 22 DMX  
"Get Me A Dog" / Def Jam-Polygram
- 23 LUNIZ  
"Lunatik Muzik" / Neo Tribe-Virgin
- 24 FUNKDOBIEST  
"The Troubadours" / Buzztone-RCA
- 25 TIMBALAND & MAGGO  
"Welcome To Our World" / Blackground-Atlantic

Compiled from CMJ *New Music Report's* weekly Beat Box charts, collected from CMJ's pool of progressive radio reporters.

**d**espite separate solo work by each component since 1991, Oakland, California's loose-knit **Hieroglyphics** (which includes Del The Funky Homosapien, Casual, the four-member Souls Of Mischief, and the duo Prose And Domino) have finally released their first album as an aggregate, *Third Eye Vision* (Hieroglyphics Imperium). Dipping deep into the sizable pool of talent that lies within this hip-hop think tank, the album offers a little bit of everything. Their blend of lies-but-serious lyrical tales of everyday life and struggles to stay on top of the game shows that they represent strongest as a group...

**DJ Adam 12** (formerly DJ Alphabet) hails from Los Angeles, but represents just about everywhere on the new *DJ Adam 12 Presents World Wide Originals EP* (Serious Entertainment), produced by himself and Mike Caren. Many props must be given for his bringing talent from all over North America to the table(s): Brooklyn's Helter Skelter, Toronto's Saukrates, LA's E-Rule and Khyri Santiago, Boston's Ed O.G., and Atlanta's Eddie Meeks and Thareko all possess thoughtful, original and downright dope styles. The lead track, "Ultimate Rush" by Helter Skelter & Saukrates, is bound to boom the underground this year, but everything here is worthy of attention... The Boot Camp Click's **Cocoa Brovaz** (who recently changed their name from Smif-N-Wessun) have returned with *The Rude Awakening* (Duck Down-Priority), the follow-up to 1995's impressive and popular *Dab Shinin'*. Rappers Tek and Steele both possess super-solid, no-nonsense lyrical styles, which are commendable. But they can also be a double-edged sword. When they have dope, raw tracks to back them up, they shine like an iced-down medallion; but when the music fails to escape the mundane, they get lost in the mix. "Won On Won," "Black Trump" (with Raekwon), "Spanish Harlem," "Bucktown USA" and the pensive "Stand Strong" all show the duo at its most effective, but in spite of these, much of this platter unfortunately tends towards the run-of-the-mill.

## armand van helden's sampleslaya

### Enter The Meatmarket (Ruffhouse-Columbia)

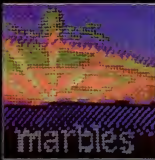
Rap music is the top listening choice for millions of us out there, but how would we feel if there were no real "raps" on a commercial hip-hop album? Apprehensive? Afraid? Filled with dread? Would it be as fulfilling to listen to as a

"regular" rap album? If these questions have been keeping you up at night, then please check out Armand Van Helden's *Enter The Meatmarket*, a collection of booming party hip-hop sound collages that's the most enjoyable all-the-way-through listen of the year thus far. Mr. Van Helden, known chiefly for his house productions and rave duties, proves here that he can work his magic in the hip-hop realm as well. The album consists of 14 extremely well-crafted exercises in producer-oriented cut-'n'-paste, made with a deep understanding of modern hip-hop and crowned with a master producer's touch. Sounds and vocal snippets wash in and out of each track, and you'll find your ears pricking up with each new element he introduces to the mix. So don't fear the non-rapness of it all: Throwdowns like "Word Up Doc," the brilliant "6 Minutes Of Funk" (co-produced by Funkmaster Flex), "Crooklyn Anthem" (co-produced by DJ Sizzahandz), "Hot Butter" and "Hey Yah Hey" will have your stereo speakers smoking all year long.



## hiss &amp; crackle

>>> **Marbles** is the name Apples In Stereo frontman Robert Schneider uses for the recordings on which he plays absolutely everything; on



"Summer Days" (Elephant 6), that extends to mastering the vinyl himself. It's also his excuse to indulge his Beach Boys fixation: The A-side is named after one of the Boys' albums, it sounds like it would fit in just fine on, say, *Friends*, and even the label of the record is in the same hues of yellow and orange that Capitol used to use on Beach Boys singles in the '60s. The B-side, "Our Song" (no relation to "Our Prayer"), is mostly an excuse for an exquisite ba-ba-ba vocal arrangement, though either Schneider's voice goes very high or he's surreptitiously brought in the Apples' Hilarie Sidney for a bit of singing.

>>> A strong contender for this month's just-plain-strange division is a one-sided 12" by the **Special Moments**, *Songs Of Whimsy* (Kindly Cock), a record that pushes Englishness to new extremes—"I'm Henry VIII, I Am" has nothing on this. Allegedly the first American release by a couple of North London brothers named Baz and Reg Lumley, it's got four long, curiously hysterical songs in a sort of Peter And Gordon-via-early-Spinal Tap mode, including a cod-folk number called "The Special Minstrel Boys" and a "live recording from Glastonbury" where Baz rants about Jesus Jones, Ned's Atomic Dustbin and Kula Shaker. Liner notes are provided by one Mick Keith.



>>> Even more out-there is the *Diversion Of Former Customary Trite Composition 7" EP* by **Clotted Symmetric Sexual Organ** (Relapse)—yes, they're Japanese and there are naked women on the cover, why do you ask? But, though it looks like an extreme-noise record, it's actually a peculiar and effective hybrid of death metal, classic rock and light pop: light-fingered flamenco guitar fills, guttural gurgling, Led Zep allusions, you name it. All this and (intermittent) catchiness, too—it must have been a nightmare to mix, but it acts so much like it has internal logic that it's easy to forget that it really doesn't.



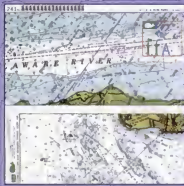
>>> A few quick drops of the needle: **His Name Is Alive** has been keeping active on the singles front lately. Besides a rocked-up split single with one of HNIA organizer Warren Defever's other projects, **Little Princess** (Rocket Science), the band has a neat 7" EP of reggae songs called *You Need A Heart To Live* (Friendly Science Enregistrations). Of course, the record title—and song titles—appear

## flin flon

## "Swift Current"

(TeenBeat)

TEENBEAT LABEL OWNER MARK ROBINSON'S OLD BAND UNREST used to put out singles every few months, but since Unrest (and its follow-up, Air Miami) ended, his recorded output has slowed to a trickle. This is the debut of his newest band, Flin Flon, a trio that also includes members of Cold Cold Hearts and True Love Always. As usual with Robinson's projects, it's small in scope but beautifully executed and deeply idiosyncratic. "Swift Current" is a minimal, low-key instrumental, built on a few bass notes and a simple polyrhythmic trick, and played with the kind of disco-inflected rhythmic lag that Robinson's picked up from post-punk bands like Joy Division and



early Public Image Ltd. The other side has two versions of a song also called "Flin Flon," one straightforward and one stranger and dubbier, separated by a locked groove. Its lyrics play with the kind of ironic use of racially charged imagery that Robinson sometimes tried in Unrest (e.g. "Yes She Is My Skinhead Girl"): "White power, white power, blue eyes, white power," he croons—later in the song, it changes to "black power" a few times. A third Flin Flon song, "Black Bear," appears on the excellent 1998 *TeenBeat Sampler* CD, and an album is promised for this summer.

nowhere on the single itself; the only way to determine them is to consult the label's website ([www.dfuse.com/xt/spoons/index.htm](http://www.dfuse.com/xt/spoons/index.htm))... Members of the low-key British indie-pop bands Pussycat Trash and Avocado Baby have regrouped as the much bolder, louder **Red Monkey**, and released a crisp and angry 7" EP, *Do What You Feel (Feel What You Do)* (Slampt). It's got the kind of cryptic, but impassioned, lyrical rhetoric that hasn't been heard much on record since Huggy Bear's heyday ("We do the raw prawn/To get at you"), and the band is planning to tour the US soon... Even if you already have her albums, **Björk**'s singles are worth tracking down for the superb remixes she commissions from unexpected quarters. The latest, "Bachelorette" (One Little Indian (UK)), has utter transformations of the song from the likes of Atari Teenage Riot's Alec Empire and the Wu-Tang Clan's RZA—they're so different that it doesn't even seem like the same song.



BY JAMES LIEN

These days, you don't see nearly as many lavish box sets and multi-CD retrospectives with 100-page booklets, probably because a lot of the best box sets have already been done. A few great boxes out there—from The Jam, Joy Division and The Zombies—are available only as imports. But still, other key suspects are still missing altogether: What about Tom Jones? Tom Waits? Neil Young? What about the 30 years' worth of alternate and unreleased Rolling Stones stuff? In any case, this month's column spotlights some single disc and budget-line titles that are worth checking out while you're waiting for that five-CD retrospective on Gerry Rafferty and Stealer's Wheel.



Sadly, I have received a tip that the **Raincoats'** CD reissues on Geffen are no longer available (perhaps without Kurt Cobain to protect them, they're subject to a more ruthless bottom line). This means that there is a dangerous scarcity of the Raincoats' quirky

## inthebins

pop-punk music in the bins. To remedy the situation, ROIR has reissued the classic, cassette-only album *The Kitchen Tapes*, and it's a welcome thing. Recorded live at the now-legendary New York venue The Kitchen, it captures the band's much-loved, highly influential sound at a high point.

Only 35 minutes from beginning to end, the **Mama's And The Papa's** 1966 album, *If You Can Believe Your Eyes And Ears*, has just been reissued by MCA. (Strangely, the album is credited as the possessive of one mama and one papa, rather than as a collective bunch of mammas and papas.) This is one of the milestone records of California rock, of pop harmony, and of the '60s as a decade.

SST has just released *Black Flag Live 1984*. For a long time, this was a cassette-only release buried in the SST catalog, known only to the more devout punks. Now it's on CD, capturing **Black Flag** going from punk to Black Sabbath to the '70s acid fusion of Tony Williams and John McLaughlin. For a spell in the early '80s, Black Flag was the band to see, and for those who remember this era well, the memories will come flooding back. Perfect listening material for when you're reading Henry Rollins's book of tour diaries, *Get In The Van*.

Blue Note Records continues to find more cool records to reissue from its seemingly endless trove of releases from the '50s and '60s. This time it's **Donald Byrd's Mustang** (from 1966), **Lee Morgan's Charisma** (from 1966), and **Reach Out!** from **Hank Mobley**. If you like funky '60s soul jazz, you'll love every minute of these.

# janis joplin with big brother and the holding co.

*Live At Winterland '68* (Columbia Legacy)

Janis Joplin was one of the true icons of the '60s. Unlike Jim Morrison or Jimi Hendrix, however, her image hasn't been substantially resculpted in the years since her death. Perhaps it's because the adulation she received and the lifestyle that she led helped to sow the seeds of her demise—after all, how many thousands of ex-hippies are wandering around still telling stories about how they shared a bottle or a joint or a toot with Janis, *man*. The pressures and the unrestrained freedom of stardom clearly played a role in Joplin's undoing; the sensitive, vulnerable girl from Texas got in over her head, and her body simply couldn't hold up. In that sense, she's probably a lot more like Kurt Cobain than people realize. These recordings, from April 1968, showcase a young, fit Joplin at the artistic peak of her career. Sure, it's just a lot of that thumping, humping, heavy, acid-drenched blues of the late '60s, but this was the authentic cosmic blues, before the formula became such a cliché. In fact, it's



better than the records that were released during her lifetime, and as such, *Winterland '68* is a vital document of Janis Joplin's power as a performer. A meteor, a fallen angel, a live wire, a candle burning at both ends—choose your romantic metaphor—she was it.

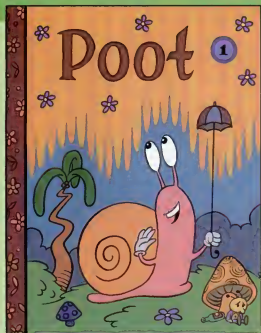
One often thinks of the post-WWII era as the time of urban blues and rock 'n' roll, but that ain't all it was: Gospel music was also experiencing a renaissance. Columbia has just released several gospel titles that may interest even the non-devotional fan. **There Will Be No Sweeter Sound** is a two-CD compilation spanning 1947-1962. There's also **Mahalia Jackson**, probably the greatest voice that gospel music has ever produced, who's got two nice CDs of her own: *A Mighty Fortress* and *The Power And The Glory*. Lastly, **Bessie Griffin** was a unique performer in the annals of gospel music. Taking the Blues Brothers phrase "on a mission from God" quite literally, she took the gospel right out of church and into the places that needed it most. Throughout the '50s and '60s, Griffin and her group, the Gospel Pearls, performed in nightclubs and even bars. Her album is called *The Fabulous Bessie Griffin & The Gospel Pearls*.

# poot

by **Walt Holcombe (Fantagraphics)**

The pocket-sized first issue of Walt Holcombe's *Poot* initially looks as insubstantial as the puff of air for which it is onomatopoeically named. But dig in, and you'll find an intriguing debut that runs the gamut from funny animals to transverse love affairs. The first, longer story, "Swollen Holler," is set in a lush woodland reminiscent of Jim Woodring's *Frank*, and populated by animals as disconsolate as they are cuddly-looking. For starters, there's a masochistic snail who hangs out by a block of salt, and a heartsick bug resigned to a lonely life of latchhook. The more elaborately drawn "Count Stinkerpuess" follows the cross-dressing, impeccably coiffed Count and his equally stylish cat, Mr. Lovely, from a triumphant appearance at a costume cat show to a heroic hiplane dogfight over a bubbling volcano. As in his last book, *The King Of Persia*, Holcombe's expressive character design and swirling, liquid lines make *Poot* a joy to look at from front to back, but he's at his best when he's being silly.

>>> *Andrea Moed*



## cd-rom

# tonka

## search and rescue

(Hasbro; for Win95, 3.1, and Mac)

If you ever constructed miniature roads in your backyard when you were a kid, you probably have fond memories of Tonka. If you want to virtually relive them, the "Tonkatown" of this disc is the place. Granted, it's got problems. An earthquake



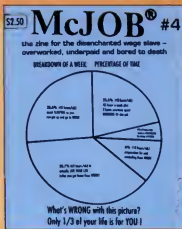
means that the zoo needs rebuilding, there's a blaze on the waterfront, and the river's in flood, but that's what happens when you mess with Mother Nature. OK, so it's aimed at kids, but everyone's got a four-year-old hiding inside, and it's worth the price just to see the graphics of men lifting trees into the shredder and high-fiving each other afterward. The dynamite blows things up real good, and besides, where else can you operate a crane, power boat, fire engine and helicopter (picking up polar bears and gorillas) within the space of an hour, and without a license? And when you've completed a task, you can even print up a newspaper article saying what a hero you are. It's in black and white, so it has to be true.

>>> *Chris Nickson*

## 'zines

In a perfect world, work and home life would harmoniously intertwine into one gratifying whole. Birdies would flutter around your desk, squirrels and bunnies would help you file, and a cool, natural breeze would provide comfort during afternoon meetings. But alas, this is not the case, as *McJob* makes us acutely aware. The title, according to editor Julie Peasley, describes "a low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector," and this 'zine chronicles the miserable lives of these slaves to the paycheck. Within *McJob* are sad and often vengeful stories of jobs that are excruciatingly tedious, demeaning and just plain horrible. It includes anecdotes of mean-spirited co-workers and bosses, humiliating work situations, dress codes and worthless interviews, as well as a few sordid tales of employee theft and sabotage. The only comfort is the knowledge that the majority of us, at one point or another, are useless, replaceable cogs, more like commodities than sentient creatures. (Available for \$2.50 from P.O. Box 11794, Berkeley, CA 94712-2794; jewelce@pachell.net.)

>>> *Randall Roberts*



keep an eye out for ... *Clerks* writer/director Kevin Smith to write six issues

books

# night beat

a shadow history of rock & roll

by Mikal Gilmore (Doubleday)

Lots of rock writers parlay their backlog of magazine articles into books, but few came up with something as cohesive and enthralling as Mikal Gilmore's collection. Like Nick Kent's *The Dark Stuff*, *Night Beat* loosely traces rock's history through a series of profiles of both the most recognized and the most overlooked artists of the rock era. Beginning with Elvis and ending with Nirvana, Gilmore recasts his articles from *Rolling Stone* and the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* to read as a historical timeline of a colorful modern-day culture. He writes eloquent character studies of subjects including Lou Reed, Randy Newman, Johnny Rotten and Al Green, drawn mostly from interviews and time spent with the musicians on assignment. Gilmore's own story is remarkable: When he started his career as a journalist in the mid-'70s, his older brother Gary was convicted of murder and became the first prisoner to be executed in the United States in decades. Mikal Gilmore later detailed the painful family experience in the acclaimed *Shot In The Heart* (Gary Gilmore's tale is also the subject of Norman Mailer's *The Execution Song*). Rock is a more joyful topic for Mikal and his passion for the music and the personalities behind it leaps from *Night Beat*'s pages.

>>> Richard Martin

# NIGHT BEAT

A SHADOW HISTORY OF ROCK & ROLL



MIKAL GILMORE

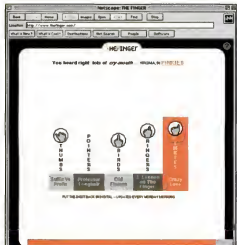
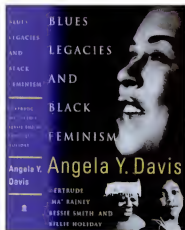
# blues legacies

and black feminisms

by Angela Y. Davis (Pantheon)

Since her release from prison (on charges related to her activity as a member of the Black Panther Party) over 20 years ago, Angela Davis has turned her intellectual acuity toward groundbreaking scholarship. The latest result of her attention to the suppressed narratives of black women's lives is this pioneering study of the proto-feminism of blues culture, embodied in the lives of Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday. With careful attention to lyrics (many of which are printed in full for the first time), Davis demonstrates how their music carried a crucial dialogue about black women's sexuality and actions into black public spheres. In sustaining a tension between the sacred and the profane, desire and pain, blues women gave their artistic work an unmistakably ethical dimension. If you're interested in American musical and social history, this volume is indispensable.

>>> Tim Haslett



(www.thefinger.com)

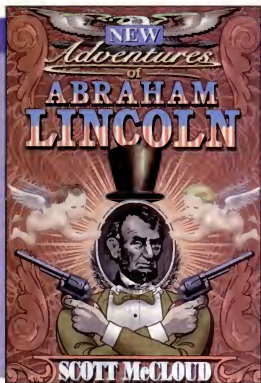
Sam Pratt, the editor of the glorious but infrequent zine *Ersatz*, has put together this site with the aid of some friends. Like *Ersatz*, it's heavy on design, and the content at its heart is small but substantial. The Finger (motto: "putting the digit back in digital") is devoted to brief essays, quotes and appreciations of various kinds, in every case more interesting than timely: The site is designed to *not* be of the moment. Subdivided into five categories, "thumbs," "pointers," "rings," "ringers" and "pinksies," the writing on The Finger is almost all very good and very unusual—not much of it would fit easily into any other web or print context. The site is updated once a week or so, but previous contributions to it are still on view.

>>> DW

net stuff

# the finger

of *Daredevil* for Marvel Comics, starting this summer *Wilde*, a film biography >>>



comics

# the new adventures of abraham lincoln

by Scott McCloud (Homage)

*Understanding Comics* put Scott McCloud on the map as the comics medium's leading theorist, though (aside from some pleasant, insubstantial scripts for *Superman Adventures*) he hadn't published a comic of his own since the early '90s. With the publication of his graphic novel *The New Adventures Of Abraham Lincoln*, we get to see his ideas in action again. The story is charming, very funny and, for lack of a better word, wholesome: With the aid of a couple of spunky kids, the historical Abraham Lincoln, back from the dead, goes to Washington to challenge the menace of, er, a sort of de-historicized, purely symbolic Abraham Lincoln who has also come back from the dead. But that's not the point: The point is to see what formal innovations McCloud has come up with this time, such as a visually breathtaking combination of meticulously computer-modeled backgrounds and hand-drawn, "cartoony" figures. >>> DW

movies

## welcome to woop woop

(MGM)

Director Stephan Elliott is no stranger to odd combinations—he directed *The Adventures Of Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert*—but his new film *Welcome To Woop Woop* is a particularly vigorous exercise in reconciling elements that don't seem to go together. For one thing, it's a wacky comedy based on a considerably less wacky novel, Douglas Kennedy's *The Dead Heart*, and bits of serious intent keep poking through its candy-colored facade. The core of the story—a con man (Johnathon Schaech) finds himself trapped in a jury-rigged village in the heart of



Australia, presided over by a despot so proud of his land he won't let anyone leave alive—could be played either way, so Elliott makes it very goofy. For one thing, the despot, played by rehabilitated character actor Rod Taylor, blasts Rodgers & Hammerstein tunes

throughout the town continually (this is, among other things, an excuse for a soundtrack with Poe doing "I Can't Say No" and an ultra-campy disco version of "Climb Ev'ry Mountain"). For another, he doesn't miss an opportunity to sneak in some beefcake. And let's not even mention the 40-foot kangaroo. >>> DW

net stuff

## united states postal service

(www.usps.gov)

Gentlemen do not read each other's mail, so it's probably best to leave the love letters, missives to Santa and presidential documents on the USPS's web presence to Sunday surfers. The site really shines when you click the "Post Office" icon on its home page, and leave the fancy graphical interface behind. There's an extremely



useful ZIP code finder, lists of accepted abbreviations, explanations of various services and, best of all, a postage-rate calculator. Say you want to send a 10-pound package to Macedonia, parcel post air, with a return receipt. You can expect to spend \$52.61; the package should arrive in four to seven days. Other handy features are printable change-of-address forms (these still have to be signed and mailed in, presumably to stop you from diverting, say, Jason Robards's mail to your hovel), links to the IRS (for forms), and all of the latest stamp designs. Considering the threat to written communication posed by faxes and email, this site somewhat daringly offers the home user all the benefits of hanging around the post office while your friend waits in line. >>> Andrew Beaujon

>>> starring British writer/actor Stephen Fry in the role he was born to play.



# def leppard

BY ANDREW BEAUION

UNTIL 1983, MY IDEA OF A REALLY GOOD SONG WAS SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF ROLF HARRIS'S "TIE ME KANGAROO DOWN" OR C.W. MCCALL'S "CONVOY." I ALSO HAD VERY LITTLE INTEREST IN THE OPPOSITE SEX. BOTH OF THESE SITUATIONS WERE ABOUT TO CHANGE WHEN I ARRIVED AT SUMMER CAMP IN ORKNEY SPRINGS, VIRGINIA, A TINY MOUNTAIN TOWN IN THE WESTERN PART OF THE STATE.

Her name was Kristen and she was a dead ringer for the most popular and unavailable girl in my junior high school. Except that she would talk to me and she had a collection of tapes that she'd walk around playing in her Sony boombox. One of them was Def Leppard's *Pyromania*, which, I was surprised to learn, everyone, including my cool roommate Roger, knew by heart. Frankly, I found it all a little dunning—the loud guitars, the shrieking, the pseudo-Germanic count-in to "Rock Of Ages"—but Kristen liked it and the necessary course of action seemed clear. Thus began a lifetime of bad decisions made in the name of unrequited love.

*Pyromania* turned out to be unlike most of what I associated with metal, though. It was completely free of references to the Hobbit, the songs were relatively short, and the sound was bright and clean. In hindsight, Def Leppard pretty much created the template for lite metal with this release, which the band meticulously crafted over the course of a whole year with producer Robert John "Mutt" Lange. And the songs are awesome: "Fooling," "Rock Of Ages" and especially "Photograph" are all just about perfect.

It was also one of the most successful records of its time. For most of 1983, *Pyromania* sold 100,000 copies a week. In the US alone, it went platinum seven times. Surprisingly, its radio presence was relatively modest: None of its singles broke the top 10. (It wasn't until 1988 that the band had a #1 hit, the then-obligatory power ballad "Love Bites.") But its ripple effects were enormous. Metal became marketable after Def Leppard. Photogenic and good-looking, the band added sex to hard grooves; indeed, the genius of the Lep was that it was the first metal band whose appeal crossed the gender line. MTV pulled everything into place, and while the band was quite literally being pelted with rotten vegetables back home for chasing Yankee dollars, those of us Stateside just couldn't

get enough of the group with the Union Jack shorts.

I learned every word. I figured out every note on the piano, waiting for some mythic occasion when I'd be able to impress my new love with my new love. I even bought the "Photograph" 45 (which, incidentally, came in a pop-up sleeve that referenced the video). After the inevitable heartbreak (via attrition), Def Leppard was a little too painful to listen to for a while.

But by that point, my resistance to rock music had crumbled, and I was fortunate enough to grow up in an area (Washington, DC, suburb Arlington, Virginia) whose local music scene quickly put me off processed techno-metal and raised the bar considerably in terms of what I expected from a band. In 1987, when *Pyromania*'s follow-up, *Hysteria*, was finally released (such tardiness due in no small part to various limbs falling off of band members), I was curious but never bought it: By that time, Rites Of Spring was a lot more important to me than Def Leppard could possibly be. (A couple of years later, I worked as an airbrush artist at an amusement park T-shirt stand a few feet away from the Superstar Recording Studio, where folks could pay to record themselves singing along to popular songs. I then became entirely too familiar with "Pour Some Sugar On Me.") For years, *Pyromania* sat backwards in my record collection, and I feared any of my "cool" friends seeing it. A couple of years ago, though, I was making a mix tape and decided to put "Photograph" on it. I was astonished at how much it still rocked me. Now the album is again an essential part of my collection, albeit one that generally goes on only when my friends and I have had a couple of beers. Kristen is a divorced futon saleswoman in Texas; we still talk once in a while. And while I still sort of wish it was a cooler record that snatched me from the clutches of novelty rock, this is still the quickest route to my inner Beavis. No serenade, no fire brigade, just pyromania. (7)

### APRIL 7

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**ANDREW BIRD**  
*Howl Of Fire: Thrills Rhythmic*  
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**Battle Hyman Hollywood**  
**UNWRITTEN LAW**  
**Unwritten Law Interscope**  
**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Skaz: The Third Wave Vol. 5 Beloved**  
**ZEKE**  
**Kicked In The Teeth Epitaph**

### APRIL 14

**CHEATER SLICKS**  
**Skidmarker Drgy!**  
**BERNARD BUTLER**  
**People Move On Columbia**  
**CLUTCH**  
**The Elephant Riders Columbia**  
**LISA GERRARD & PIETER BOURKE**  
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**EBBA FORSBERG**  
**Blue Trains Maverick**  
**CHRIS ISAAK**  
**Little Black Flowers Reprise**  
**BILL LASWELL**  
**Oscillations 2 Sub Rosa**  
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**Pantballas: The Music Of Miles Davis Columbia**  
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**Feverish Manumoth**  
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**My Way Or The Highway Elektra**

### APRIL 21

**NATACHA ATLAS**  
**Nalin Beggars Banquet**  
**CAUSTIC RESIN**  
**The Medicine Is All Gone Alias**

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**13 Day Getaway Lava-Atlantic**  
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**GAS HUFFER**  
**Just Beautiful Music Epitaph**  
**PHILIP GLASS**  
**Symphony No. 2, Saxophone Concerto, Orpheus**  
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**Euphoria, Confusion, Anger, Remorse Epitaph**  
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**Don't Wait For Me Anyway**  
**JIM O'Rourke/SASHA FRERE-JONES**  
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**YOU AM I**  
**The Fourth Record Warner Bros.**

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**All**  
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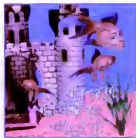
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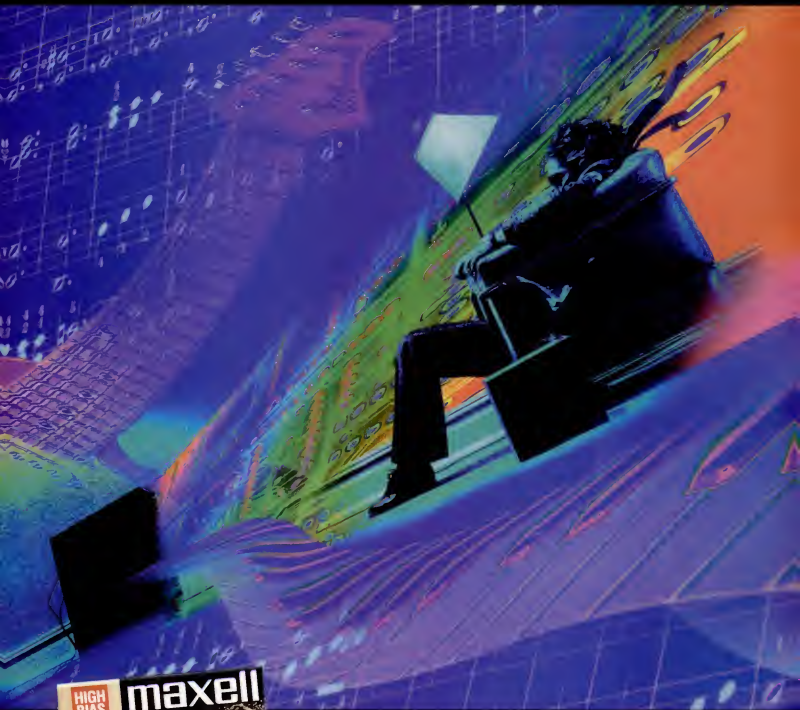
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artist	title	label
1 ANI DIFRANCO	Little Plastic Castle	Righteous Babe
2 DJ SHADOW	Preemptive Strike	Mo Wax/ftr-London
3 PEE SHY	Don't Get Too Comfortable	Blue Gorilla-Mercury
4 HUN	Downward Is Heavenward	NCA
5 MARY LOU LOUD	Got No Shadow	WDRK
6 HIGH LLAMAS	Cold And Bouncy	VZ
7 HALO BENDERS	The Rebels Not In	K
8 NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL	In The Aeroplane Over The Sea	Merigo
9 CIVIVE	Come Clean	Estayado-Universal
10 AIR	Moon Safari	Source-Caroline
11 UNWOUND	Challenge For A Civilized Society	Kill Rock Stars
12 JESUS LIZARD	The Jesus Lizard (EP)	Jetset
13 BLACK GRAPE	Stupid Stupid Stupid	Radioactive
14 MONO	Formica Blues	Mercury
15 KRISTIN HERSH	Strange Angels	Rykodisc
16 JUNE OF 44	Four Great Points	Quarterstick
17 BEDHEAD	Transaction De Novo	Trance Syndicate
18 CAP'N JAZZ	Analphabetapoliology	Jade Tree
19 AUTOUR DE LUCIE	Immobile	Network
20 FASTBALL	All The Pain Money Can Buy	Hollywood
21 KING BRITT PRESENTS STYLX 130	When The Funk Hits The Fan	Guns/Buffouse-Columbia
22 BRAH VAH 3000	Glee	Capitol
23 HEPCAT	Right On Time	Helicat-Epithaph
24 BOWTYGRUNT	Jen-Fi	No Life
25 BEN FOLDS FIVE	Naked Baby Photos	Caroline
26 PEARL JAM	Yield	Epic
27 JAMES BIA	Let It Come Down	Virgin
28 DONNAS	American Teenage Rock 'N' Roll Machine	Lookout!
29 GODHEADSLO	Share The Fantasy	Sub Pop
30 COURSE OF EMPIRE	Telepathic Last Words	TVT
31 DJ SPOOKY THAT SUBLIMINAL KID	Synthetic Fury (EP)	Asphodel
32 RAMMSTEIN	Sehnsucht	Slash-London
33 GOLDIE	Saturnzreturn	ftr-London
34 SAM AM	You Are Freaking Me Out	Ignition
35 SOUNDTRACK	Great Expectations	Atlantic
36 HOME	13: Netherregions	Jetset
37 SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER	Low Estate	A&M
38 GASTR DEL SOL	Camoufleur	Drag City
39 MOMIUS	Ping Pong	La Grand Magistry
40 PASTELS	Illumination	Up
41 KMFDM	KMFDM	Wax Trax!-TVT
42 FEEDER	Polythene	Elektra-EGG
43 POSIES	Success	Poplana
44 DROPKICK MURPHYS	Do Or Die	Helicat-Epithaph
45 MIDDLE MOUSE	The Lonesome Crowded West	Up
46 SIXTEEN DELUXE	Emit's Showers Of Sparks	Warner Bros.
47 TEEN IDOLS	Teen Idols	Honest Doe's
48 OF MONTREAL	The Bird Who Ate The Rabbit's Flower (EP)	Kindercore
49 SPATULA	Despina By Land	Squealer
50 VARIOUS ARTISTS	Big Rock'N Beats	Wax Trax!-TVT
51 SOUNDTRACK	Half-Baked	MCA
52 RADIOHEAD	OK Computer	Capitol
53 SOUNDTRACK	The Wedding Singer	Maverick-WB
54 UNSANE	Occupational Hazard	Relapse
55 TULLYCRAFT	City Of Subarus	Cher Doll-Darla
56 NOFX	So Long And Thanks For All The Shoes	Epithaph
57 SWEEP THE LEG JOHNNY	4.9.21.30	Diyet
58 GERALD COLLIER	Gerald Collier	Revolution
59 SUBLIME	Second-Hand Smoke	Gasoline Alley-MCA
60 TRANSISTOR SOUND & LIGHTING CO.	Transistor Sound & Lighting Co.	Vik
61 C-TEC	Darker	Wax Trax!-TVT
62 RUSTIC OVERTONES	Rooms By The Hour	Ripcord
63 VICTORIA WILLIAMS	Musings Of A Creek Dipper	Atlantic
64 FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY	Flavour Of The Weak	Metropolis
65 RADIOLARIA	Fuzz Is Verse	Twist Top
66 THE VERVE	Urban Hymns	Virgin
67 SKATALITES	Ball Of Fire	Island Jamaica Jazz
68 SWEVEYDRIVER	99th Dream	Zero Hour
69 C-60S	The C-60s	Spongebath
70 VARIOUS ARTISTS	What The World Needs Now...	Big Deal
71 DIMITRI FROM PARIS	Sacrebleu	Atlantic
72 DUMP	A Plea For Tenderness	Brickman
73 GOOD RIDDANCE	Ballads From The Revolution	Fat Wreck Chords
74 LUXX	Luxx	Push
75 CHERI KNIGHT	The Northeast Kingdom	E-Squared

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**17** "My dad's originality and fame was a big prohibition," says **RACIND**, whose father and uncle were both in rock and the Grunge. "How did I do that? A monumental thing. I'm still discovering stuff today. I discovered a very different way, but our heritage for the industry is genetic." —*Reagan Power Up Co., a tribute to French icon Serge Gainsbourg, is taken from Richard's debut album, Prototype (Universal). (See review, pg. 49)*

**18** Santa Barbara, California's **ULTRAVOX** began in 1981 as a speed metal band. After a brief hiatus, the band reunited a few years later. "I was doing the metal thing, and I learned," says lead singer **DAVID POE**. "I was doing the metal thing, and I learned." Poe's band's sound is a mix of metal and post-punk, with a focus on melody and atmosphere. —*See review, pg. 49*

**19** "I have to be careful in the past because **DAVID POE** was behind the band before, so I learned," says lead singer **DAVID POE**. "I was doing the metal thing, and I learned." Poe's band's sound is a mix of metal and post-punk, with a focus on melody and atmosphere. —*See review, pg. 49*

**20** "Remember, you are going to meet some out of town," says **MICK MORRIS**. "I was doing the metal thing, and I learned." Poe's band's sound is a mix of metal and post-punk, with a focus on melody and atmosphere. —*See review, pg. 49*

**21** "Remember, you are going to meet some out of town," says **MICK MORRIS**. "I was doing the metal thing, and I learned." Poe's band's sound is a mix of metal and post-punk, with a focus on melody and atmosphere. —*See review, pg. 49*

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CMJ NEW MUSIC

VOLUME 57 | MAY 1998

**1** "It's like you've stood in the cold outside a really good party, but the music's too loud for people to hear you knocking on the window," says **FRIDAY'S** Brent Cooper, explaining his band's refusal to rock stadiums. "But then they tell us we're the worst so we say 'Good time.' " —*"Bad Hair" comes from the group's latest album, This Is Madness (Atlantic). (See cover story, pg. 32)*

**2** "Rock stars are born with another perspective and that perspective is the ability to stress yourself up," says **SCOTT WHEELAND**. "It's like, birds fly and crash when I just want people to realize that everybody has some sort of a perspective. The two things I know how to do on the road is how to fly and write songs and crash when I just want people to realize that everybody has some sort of a perspective. The two things I know how to do on the road is how to fly and write songs and crash when I just want people to realize that everybody has some sort of a perspective." —*See review, pg. 32*

**3** "I just can't wait to get back to America and get on the road," says **MOONCHICKEN'S** Paul Godfrey of the band's impending tour dates. "I was doing the metal thing, and I learned." Poe's band's sound is a mix of metal and post-punk, with a focus on melody and atmosphere. —*See review, pg. 49*

**4** **HERTZ**, who's best known for the dance remixes he's done for other acts, says "I never felt like I belonged in house anymore." —*See review, pg. 32*



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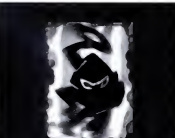
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BY BOB COHEN AND DANIEL HAMAR



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## budapestfolkmusicscene

HUNGARY HAS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST VIBRANT FOLK MUSIC SCENES, AND A VISIT TO BUDAPEST PUTS YOU IN THE CENTER OF IT ALL. ¶ WHEN BÉLA BARTÓK AND ZOLTÁN KODÁLY ROAMED THE HUNGARIAN COUNTRYSIDE COLLECTING FOLK SONGS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, THEY WEREN'T JUST CREATING THE SCIENCE OF MODERN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY OUT OF THIN AIR. BARTÓK AND KODÁLY HELPED LINK THE IDENTITY OF THE MODERN HUNGARIAN NATION TO ITS RURAL FOLK TRADITIONS. TODAY, FEW PLACES IN EUROPE DEFY THE DRIVE TOWARDS EURO-HOMOGENEITY LIKE HUNGARY. A TURBULENT HISTORY, A BAFFLINGLY DIFFICULT LANGUAGE AND A STRONG RURAL FOLK TRADITION GUARANTEE THAT A TRIP TO HUNGARY WON'T BE JUST ANOTHER TOURISTY WEEKEND.

Back in the early 1970s, young Hungarians, tired of the "fake" folklore sponsored by the communist culture authorities, reclaimed their real traditional music and dance. Led by musicians and dance researchers like György Martin, Béla Halmos and the members of Muzsikás, teenaged Hungarians traveled the countryside seeking out the elder generation of folk fiddlers, bagpipers and cranky old hurdy-gurdy players. In the Hungarian region of Pennsylvania, located in next door Rumania, the music was preserved as a statement of ethnic pride. Just as young American fiddlers flocked to Appalachia to learn their trade, Hungarian musicians soaked up tunes at the feet of great musicians in villages like Szék, Méra and Palatka. Soon the Budapest scene adopted the rural tradition of renting a house for dances, usually in a "culture center." Twenty-five years on, this "dance house" movement is no longer a youth movement. If you want to feel the atmosphere of it, go to the Kalamajka Dance House in the Belvárosi Ifjúsági Ház (District V, Molaár utca 9, tel: 117-5928, near Fereaciek tere Metro) on any Saturday night. You'll find everyone from the university set to émigré Transylvanian construction



workers dancing, drinking and smoking to the real traditional music. But come early to learn the basic steps and don't worry about going alone—you'll meet loads of people who speak English.

The most famous of the dance house bands is Muzsikás, which uses the raw, traditional sounds of the Transylvanian string bands, the shepherds' goatskin bagpipes, and the directness of folk songs' texts sung by Márta Sebestyén to protest against the communist government's strong-arm cultural policies, providing a musical voice to the dissident movement. If they aren't touring somewhere, they get together for a cozy jam session every Thursday evening at the Marczibányi téri

Művelődési Központ (District II, Marczibányi tér 5/a, tel: 212-5789, near Moszkva tér Metro). On Wednesday nights at the same venue, the Tatros Moldavian Dance House presents the raucous and ancient music of the Moldavian Csángó Hungarians. Other good dances include the Teka Dance House on Friday nights at the I. Kerületi Művelődési Ház (District I, Bem Rakpart 6, tel: 201-0324, near Clark Adam ter on the 19 tram line) and the



Meta Dance House on Sunday nights (Józsefvarosi Club, District VIII, Somogyi Béla doe 13, tel: 118-7930, near Blaha Lujza tér Metro station and tram 4, 6).

Two new venues specialize in acoustic folk music from Hungary and elsewhere. In Pest there is folk music several nights a week at the Gyökér Restaurant (District VI, corner of Eötvös utca and Szabi utca, tel: 153-4329, near Nyugati Metro). Run by a folk musician, the Gyökér ("Roots") serves great fried Camembert cheese (ask if they have homemade "házi" palinka) on tables decorated with village textiles. Peruse the photos on the wall, taken in villages by musician/folklorist Béla Kása while bands play in the adjoining room—Friday is always a dance house night here. Across the Danube in Buda the Fono Music House (District II, Szregova utca 3, tel: 206-6295, on the 47 tram line) sets high standards for all kinds of acoustic folk, jazz and ethno-fusion music. This is the place to catch visiting bands from Transylvania, or go all limp at the playing of Mihály Dresch, a superb jazz sax improviser who takes Hungarian folk music and reinvents it on a daily basis. This venue also has one of the best folk and jazz CD shops in town.

Hungary is known for its gypsy music. The syrupy version tends to be played in expensive tourist restaurants. For neo-traditional music of gypsy, like Kalyi Yag or Ando Drom, keep an eye on the multicultural happenings at the Almásy téri Szabadidő Központ (District, VII Almásy tér 6, tel: 352-1572, near Blaha Lujza tér Metro). Friday nights often feature gypsy music, and other nights may offer gigantic dance houses focusing on the music of a specific region or ethnic minority of Hungary, such as Klezmer, Serb or Greek music nights.

One way to spend a weekday afternoon is to check out one of the professional folk dance troupes at the Budai Vigadó (District I, Corvin tér 8, tel: 201-5928, near Bathányi tér Metro). In the same building you can find the Folk Dance Union, an all-purpose umbrella organization whose website (in English with sound clips!) should not be missed if you are planning a trip).



For the CD deprived, everything connected to folk music can be found at the Etnofon Record Shop (District VII, Dohány utca 74, tel: 351-3341, near Blaha Lujza metro in Pest). Also try the Kodály Zoltán Music Store (District V, Múzeum körút 21, tel: 117-3347, near Astoria Metro). If you want to get your greedy hands on a folk instrument like a three-stringed Transylvanian kontra viola or a Hungarian bagpipe, ask musicians at the dance houses where to go—there are lots of master craftsmen, but you won't see their work in any downtown shops. Still, a visit to the flea market at Ecsri Piac on Saturday

morning (53 bus from Boráros tér, Saturday before noon—just ask for the "pee-atz") can turn up a good cheap fiddle or clarinet, as well as embroidered costumes, antiques and just about everything else you'd expect at the world's best flea market. If you want to take a peek at old women wearing embroidered shirts and strange headdresses, take the 7 bus in Pest to Bosnyák tér vegetable market in the morning; here, peasant grannies still hawk bunches of herbs and mutant vegetables. Also keep an eye out for costumed peasants from Transylvania selling their embroidered family laundry near the Folklore Museum (at Kossuth ter Metro) in the downtown shopping streets around Vaci Utca, or at dance houses.

Accommodations in Budapest range from cheap hotels to over-priced big hotels. The city can be surprisingly affordable compared to other European capitals, especially for eating out. Stay away from downtown tourist restaurants and you'll be fine. The Gresham Borozó and the Mérég Restaurant (both on Mérég utca near Roosevelt tér, District V) offer cheap, good and militantly real Hungarian food. The Szent Júpát Restaurant in Buda (Trombitás u., tel: 321-1297, at Moszkva ter Metro) is another favorite with musicians. It's open 24 hours and known for unbelievably large portions of cheap, terribly unhealthy food. Do not leave Hungary without trying Unicum, the superbly strange national liqueur. But don't drink more than three. You have been warned.

The telephone code for Hungary is 36; the city code for Budapest is 1.

*Daniel Hamar plays in the group Muzsikás. Bob Cohen is a writer and expatriate living in Budapest.*

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